

JPRS-NEA-91-075
31 OCTOBER 1991

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JPRS Report

Near East & South Asia

19980203 371

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SPRINGFIELD, VA 22161

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Near East & South Asia

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REGIONAL AFFAIRS

Minister: No Egypt-Iraq Nuclear Program Link

92P40026A London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT 23 Oct 91
p 4

[Excerpts] Egyptian Minister of Electricity Mahir Abazah has denied any participation by Egyptian nuclear scientists in the Iraqi nuclear weapons production program. He denied the existence of any agreement between Egypt and Iraq in the nuclear field and indicated that the agreement signed with India in the 1960s is the only one Egypt has made regarding the peaceful use of nuclear power. [passage omitted]

The minister indicated that a desire to ensure safety was behind the halt in the nuclear power station project for generating electricity. He added that the rise in the cost of the nuclear station's construction was among the factors that have caused program delays and resulted in the movement towards constructing more thermal power stations.

Benvenisti Discusses Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

92AE0008A Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 17 Sep 91
p 4B

[Article by Meron Benvenisti]

[Text] A perusal of the extensive literature which deals with the Israeli-Arab conflict and which follows the public discussion of it reveals a surprising phenomenon: The political and academic discussion is rich with answers but poor on questions. The initiators of settlement proposals and the authors of peace plans fill the shelves of libraries with detailed, reasoned arguments. They convene assemblies and recruit supporters. They argue heatedly with each other over whose plan is more applicable. However, only a few take the trouble to define the problem which they seek to solve.

The longstanding conflict apparently does not require a definition. Everyone knows what is at issue. Therefore, it seems primitive to even inquire as to the diagnosis on which the treatment method should be based. Moreover, any attempt to shift the discussion from dealing with answers to defining questions, or at least any demand to link a reasoned answer to a defined question, is perceived as an attempt to divert, and even sabotage, efforts to find a solution. The treatment of the problems proceeds only from the discussion of solutions. In other words, what are the difficulties that are liable to emerge after the application of one or another solution? This is similar to a doctor who diagnoses the sickness according to the inventory of medicines at his disposal.

This reversed order of discussion has become so rooted that even respected policy research bodies base their studies and plans on "alternatives (for a solution) raised by significant sectors in the Israeli political arena," and they deal with such alternatives without defining such

questions as: "What is the nature of the Israeli-Arab conflict?" "Who is directly involved in it?" "Is the approach of proposing defined solutions applicable to this conflict?" "Should the focus be on outlining a process or on defining the goal?" The Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University presented a study in 1989 entitled "Judea, Samaria, and Gaza; Paths to a Peace Settlement," which, at the time, obtained extensive media exposure and enthusiastic political treatment. The report presents six "alternatives": the continuation of the status quo, autonomy, annexation, a Palestinian state, a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and a Jordanian-Palestinian federation. These alternatives were selected and discussed because "they engage Israelis," not because the researchers arrived at them after defining the problems which they sought to solve. The researchers even failed to present an introductory discussion on the conflict-resolution potential of the solutions that are acceptable to "one or another sector in the Israeli political arena."

In this way, the academic discussion feeds the public discussion in a vicious circle: The fictitious "alternatives" are tested in public opinion surveys that produce "public positions," which feed the political discussion, which in turn serves as the basis for new policy papers, and so on. This search for a lost coin under a lamp indicates that the Israeli political culture has invented a unique logical process, which does not involve questions that seek answers, but convenient formulas that seek easy questions. It is no wonder that plans for a solution are accumulating on the shelves but there is no solution. Reality does not need the approval of Israeli public opinion, nor could it care less about its taboos.

The stresses of reality burst forth from laconic assumptions that appear unexplained in the preambles of proposals for a solution, such as: "Our assumption is that the problem of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has become a decisive aspect...of the Israeli-Arab conflict." This assumption is bound to be overturned when the "peace process" between Israeli and the Arab states "becomes the decisive aspect" when the American secretary of state visits. These assumptions are more similar to articles of faith than to hypotheses based on empirical data. Other definitions of the conflict are, for example, a dispute over water resources in the Middle East, a struggle between two nationalist movements for sovereignty over a common homeland, the struggle against Arab terror, an intercommunal, intercultural conflict, and others. Use of one definition to the exclusion of another embraces within it the solution that corresponds to the ideological outlook of the user. There is only one question to which all are a party: "What will the end be?" Everyone hopes, or fears, the advent of some "end"—deliverance or a terrible disaster.

Reflection on the "end," and the preoccupation with comprehensive peace plans and final settlement proposals, are based on the optimistic assumption that logic, a willingness to compromise, and good will prevail among all of the parties to the conflict, or the assumption

that the parties can at least be convinced of the advantages of peace. This hope is typical of the left's thinking. As a result of this militant passivity, leftist circles, in putting forth new plans for a solution, deal only with "the reality" that follows deliverance, not the difficulties and constraints of the present or the planning of a strategy that will lead to the desired solution.

Leftist circles respond with heated anger when a doubt is raised to the effect that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict perhaps lacks a permanent solution because of its chronic, endemic character and unique components. According to these circles, debating the relative advantages of different solutions is permitted; however, denying the possibility of finding a solution, and moreover denying the theoretical, intellectual exercise of formulating solutions means lending legitimacy to the status quo and providing a service to the right, which supports the continuation of the status quo. It seems that the preoccupation with solutions was created, not to promote real political decisions, but to nurture the hope that a solution is indeed possible and even "inevitable."

Richard Rose, an outstanding researcher on Northern Ireland, wrote: "Many speak of a solution to the political problem of Northern Ireland. However, few are willing to say what the problem is. The reason is simple. The problem is that there is no solution." This statement also applies, not coincidentally, to the "political problem" of the land of Israel. The conflicts in the land of Israel and Northern Ireland (and South Africa as well) stem from similar historical circumstances. In addition, the lack of a political solution in each case stems from a similar dynamic of intercommunal relations. This is not the place to detail the similarities and differences between Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Israel. For our purposes, it suffices to define the basic similarity regarding the roots of the conflict in each locale.

Michael MacDonald, defines the similarities: "The basic similarity between the three cases is the act of settlement. The conflicts developed because the settlers settled and their progeny remained. The new people struck roots in their new country. The tragedy is that it is precisely the depth of their loyalty that has worsened their relations with the local inhabitants. If the settlers were to have exploit the settlement and leave it, as the imperialists did, or carry out genocide, as the white Americans or Australians did, the conflicts with the original population would be less severe."

In Northern Ireland, Israel, and South Africa, settlers formed communities and became inhabitants of the land. Their features of ethnic recognition, which existed before they came, were augmented by new signs of recognition that were molded in the crucible of their conflict with the local inhabitants. Thus conflict also shaped the local inhabitants into defined, ethnic nationalities. As a result of the intimate mutual hostility between the two communities, the central component of their self-identification came to be defined not only as who they are, but also who they are not. The settlers'

political culture is European-liberal. This has great bearing on their internal political systems, which are based on liberal, democratic principles. This Western tradition also shaped these societies' ideologies and ethnic myths, primarily by figuring in the development of a conceptual and emotional system that justifies the act of settlement in the settled land and the discriminatory treatment of the original inhabitants of the land.

The liberal-western tradition did not apply to intercommunal relations. According to MacDonald, the hostility encountered by the settlers, their difficulties in striking roots in the new land, and the meanings that were ascribed to their different origins—these factors served as a basis for their establishment of dichotomous social and political institutions. When the territories under discussion gained independence (in Northern Ireland home rule), the settler societies in them established a regime based on a rigid, hierarchical stratification in the framework of which the settlers obtained an absolute monopoly over the resources of the government and economy. Moreover, the settlers perceived their superiority as an acquired right, but they perceived the collective aspirations of members of the ruled community as suspect in the best case, and as illegitimate and subversive in extreme cases. The hostility and the rift between the settlers and the inhabitants of the land were perceived as an existential situation. Therefore, the settlers' children continued to maintain antagonist economic, social, and political relations, and the vigorous systems which they built to manage them. In this way, the conflict was perpetuated.

A multilayer, multifaceted conflict therefore exists between the settler societies that struck roots and the societies of the original inhabitants of the land. On the one hand, this conflict is a political, nationalist-ethnic struggle for sovereignty over a single homeland. On the other hand, it is a conflict typical of split societies, which stems from an unequal distribution of resources, an asymmetrical economic dependence, and the exclusive control of one group—factors which foster a trend toward instability and violence. To complete the picture, we must add the feeling of superiority of the settlers' descendants over the backward, indigenous people, i.e., the element of a colonial struggle.

One who defines the conflict in the land of Israel as a nationalist, Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be correct, but would not extract the special character of this national struggle. A conflict between two peoples is waged between groups separated by a demographic or political demarcation line. By contrast, The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is internal, and the enemy lives in the territory that is perceived as the homeland, even in the same district and city. Therefore, the element of friction in relations between ethnic groups, which is characteristic of split societies, must be added to the element of "national conflict" in defining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Whoever defines the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a post-colonial conflict would also be correct. However, such a definition would not extract

the fundamental difference between classic, colonial conflicts, and conflicts involving settler societies that have struck roots in their country, established enduring societies, maintained a presence after the departure of the imperialist force, and, most importantly, have no place to which to "return."

The complexity of the conflict as described above is apparently why people refrain from defining it and instead flee in search of a "solution" or a definition that corresponds to their ideology and the solution with which they feel most comfortable. This writer has chosen to define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a conflict between two national communities, or, briefly, as an intercommunal conflict. In no way does this definition reduce the conflict to social friction (e.g., the interracial tension in the United States), which does not revolve around sovereignty. Nor does it negate the national component of the conflict. On the contrary, by defining the conflict as intercommunal, an attempt is made to extract its full meaning—political, social, ideological, and psychological. The conventional approach, which views the conflict in political terms, is oversimplified and misleading. Hence, Richard Rose wrote what he wrote regarding Northern Ireland. When he said that the problem has no solution, he was referring to the fact that solutions had been proposed to remedy the "political problem," when the problem is in fact not "political." All of the solutions "that engage Israelis" are political: a territorial compromise, autonomy, a Palestinian state, a federation, etc. However, it is impossible to arrive at political solutions without prior treatment of meta-political problems—psychological and conceptual problems—which prevent the parties to the conflict from considering such solutions rationally. One who seeks to deal with solutions must contend with an ancient, basic, existential conflict. Alber Kami provides a harsh description of this type of conflict. He writes (on the conflict in Algeria): "It was as if two insane, half-crazed peoples decided to engage in a fatal embrace—a forced wedding from which they cannot release themselves. They are compelled to be together but are unable to unite. Ultimately, they decide to die together." An intimate confrontation transformed the two communities into mirror images of each other. Both move in a "fatal embrace" in a dance of death. The Jewish community, which is stronger and more developed than its adversary, seeks to subdue the Palestinian community and thus obtain peace and quiet. However, the Palestinian community refuses, contrary to all logic, to acknowledge its defeat. It continues the violent struggle, wresting from the Jews their enjoyment of the fruits of their victory.

One who seeks to solve this conflict through peaceful means based on a rational approach, and to hold a "dialogue leading to a compromise," ignores the layers of violence and the destructive dynamic of the conflict. Such a person refuses to understand that the problem is not violence in itself, or even the absence of a desire for peace, but the two communities' perception of the existential situation. The settlers' children continue to experience their parents' feeling of mission and danger,

whereas the land's original inhabitants continue to experience an alien penetration and the trauma of their eviction, which have been ongoing now for 100 years and which make them fear for their existence as a community.

This initial conflict continues to feed the "dialogue of violent acts" and precludes the possibility of setting rules of the game, without which give and take are meaningless. If you do not recognize your hater as a legitimate enemy, how can you reach a compromise with him? Moreover, the proponents of the rational, pacifist approach aspire to make a break with feelings of hatred and fear. They show disgust in the face of the ancient urges and the primitive violence of an incited mob. However, the "mob," whose picture of the world is etched by fear, hatred, and violence, (which is justified almost daily by the murderous attacks of the enemy), is rebelling against the elitist, alienated approach of the "peace camp." The general attempt to impose rational, symmetrical rules of the game is interpreted as the betrayal and denial of the settler-security ethos.

The perception of the conflict as a "fatal embrace," and the brutality of the conflict, do not startle circles of the right. According to their perception, the Jews of the land of Israel are in a life-and-death struggle with the Arabs. They believe that the existential danger and the superiority of their national claim require them to respond unbendingly to enemy threats. They believe that their vigorous control of the Arabs is a necessity of reality, without which the Arabs would destroy the Jewish community. The right, fed by feelings of fear and hatred, gives these feelings political expression and cultivates them, so that it can obtain a parliamentary majority and continue the effort to destroy the enemy.

The right, which has risen to and holds power, makes efficient use of the mechanisms of vigorous control. However, it also uses systems established and cultivated by the founding fathers to promote the formation and survival of the fledgling settler society. The "state in the making"—the voluntary political, military, educational, economic, settlement, and social system established by circles of the Zionist center and left—has now become a tool in the hands of the right for the application of its ideology. The right not only uses these institutions and mechanisms, but also the old Zionist myths in which it had no part in forming and even scorned at one time.

The new reality which the right has created, the halo of respectability conferred by governmental authority, and changes in the political-cultural tradition—all of these factors combined to create highly significant changes in the Israeli collective identity. Barukh Kimmerling distinguishes these changes by indicating the "semantic" change, "as it were," in the definition of the collective and what is hidden behind it. He shows how the name "land of Israel" is replacing the name "state of Israel" in daily use, and he characterizes this change in the nature of the Israeli-Jewish collective as being: from a collective in which citizenship determines affiliation to a collective

in which "Judaism is a necessary and sufficient condition for affiliation," so that "gentiles" (Arabs) are thus excluded from the collective; from a collective that functions according to Western, liberal criteria to one in which tribal and religious values predominate; from a collective whose individuals are tested according to their function and specific contribution to society to a collective in which they are tested according to the measure of their Judaism, be it traditional or patriotic, or a combination; from a collective based on the principle of settlement [toshavut] to one based on blood ties; from a collective whose perceived physical borders are the green line to a collective whose borders are the mandatory land of Israel; from a national Jewish state in which there is an Arab minority with the right to vote to a binational state in which 40 percent of the residents are denied basic political rights.

Whoever seeks to find a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must relate to "the land of Israel" and not to "the state of Israel." The latter is a sociopolitical entity that is melting away, and several of its components have blended in a new entity. This is not a value judgment but a fact. One seeking to contend with its implications must not let his analysis and conclusions be colored by his personal motives and ideological preferences.

"The premise of the study" or "the definition of the problem" is therefore this: Israel is currently a binational state from the standpoint of its ethnic composition, and a democracy of a ruler people from the standpoint of its regime (Pierre Vandenberg coined the term "democracy of a people of masters" to characterize a political framework in which the ruling ethnic group maintains a democratic regime, and the ruled group is denied the right to vote). The Jewish-Arab conflict has ceased being a conflict centered in interstate enmity. It has become an internal, intercommunal conflict. The Israeli Government will rule over the entire area of the western land of Israel for the foreseeable future (either by dint of its sovereignty or the right of belligerent occupation). This status quo is not static. It is dynamic, violent, and unstable, as is the case in every binational or multi-ethnic state in which the ruling community has an absolute monopoly on power. The ruled community, which is blocked from engaging in a legitimate struggle, turns to a violent civil rebellion, and the ruling community responds with counterviolence. The confrontation grows more acute, but remains circumscribed in its internal framework.

"The premise of this study" determines that the struggle is centered in Israeli-Palestinian relations, whereas the external, interstate struggle is secondary. A strong connection between the intercommunal conflict and the interstate conflict no doubt exists. However, the essential difference between the two conflicts must not be blurred by this strong connection. An interstate conflict is waged within a defined international system composed of sovereign states. These states weigh and make decisions based on concrete, utilitarian considerations,

among which ideology plays a secondary role if any. Conflicts or conflicts of interest between states can be defined and formulated, and a process for settling them has been laid out and perfected over the course of hundreds of years of diplomatic negotiations. The subject of such negotiations is not the status of each party as an entity having a separate and autonomous identity; the discussion focuses on the circumstances and conditions in which the autonomous entity functions, and on the conflict of legitimate interests between it and the autonomous entity facing it.

An intercommunal conflict revolves around basic questions of self-identity, self-expression, ancient fears, disputes over symbolic assets (homeland, symbols of sovereignty), and absolute justice. The intercommunal conflict is a struggle for the supreme values of identity and survival. It is "impossible to compromise" on these values. The two parties use a rational, pragmatic argot in their contacts with external elements. However, these are only rhetorical expressions that conceal an agenda of absolute values.

As stated, a strong connection exists between the external conflict and the intercommunal conflict. However, distinguishing between them in the context of the search for order highlights the inherent difficulty in using the "peace process" model as a means to solve the internal conflict. A peace process is primarily a linear process based on the perception of peace and war as two dichotomous situations. An intercommunal conflict is neither a war nor peace. Rather, it is a situation of gray areas, of chronic violence. It is perceived as an existential situation and a struggle for absolute values. Therefore, its dynamic is circular, not linear. The parties move around an existential axis without breaching it. Therefore, it is impossible to apply the traditional "peace process" to intercommunal conflicts.

The question is asked: Why have all of the proposals for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict been anchored in the "peace process"? Why is it that the solutions being proposed are borrowed from the conceptual universe of international conflicts? Why are refuted plans rehashed? Why is there a refusal to recognize the intercommunal nature of the conflict? Because such a refusal defers contending with reality. As long as it is possible to believe in the applicability of a linear peace process, it is possible to ignore the circular-existential character which the parties to the conflict fashioned with their own hands. As long as it is possible to believe in the everlastingness of old plans, it is possible to ignore the passing of time. As long as it is possible to believe in the external character of the conflict, it is possible to ignore the status quo.

Israelis and Palestinians repress the circular reality with the help of a circular concept of time. In their eyes, chronological time—the changing of the seasons, the years that pass, the changing reality—are nothing but a mechanical sequence, a meaningless flux. Defeats herald the inevitable victory! The present is but a countdown to

the time of salvation, which will come "momentarily." Dangers are cast into the distant future. Ignoring them is a shield against desperation. Dilemmas do not become problems requiring a decisive, irreversible decision. The present is forfeited.

Amin Ma'luf, a Lebanese writer, wrote a book called "Leo Africanus" on "Andalusia [the name of Arabized Spain in the Middle Ages]," the lost Garden of Eden, an allegory that sheds light on the Arab world today, mainly on lost Palestine. The father, who was expelled from Grenada, tells his son: "Do you see, Hasan, all of these people still hold on. The keys to their houses in Grenada hang on their walls. Each day, they look at them, sighing and praying. Each day they again recall their joys and deeds there. A certain pride fills them. Such things are never to be found in exile. Their only reason for existence is the thought that, soon, thanks to the great sultan or divine providence, they will again find their house, with the color of its stones, the smell of the garden, and the water in the fountain—everything whole, unchanged, exactly as in their dream. Thus they live and thus they will die, and their children after them as well. Perhaps some day someone will dare to teach them to reflect unflinchingly on their downfall and explain to them that, in order for one to stand on his feet, he must first acknowledge that he is stretched out on the ground. Perhaps someone will have to tell them the truth some day. However, I myself do not have the courage."

As matters now appear, the chances for a substantive change are not great. Although this conflict has gone on for more than 100 years, it is still not ripe for a solution, mainly because both parties suppress reality by defining it as "temporary." If the Palestinians were to succeed in overcoming their shame-honor complex and dreams of "Andalusia," they would tell the Israelis: "Fine, you won—dictate to us the terms of capitulation, but remember that you are proud of the values of equality, democracy, and liberalism. A regime based on the subjugation of millions cannot survive forever." If the Israelis were to comprehend the reality as it is, not through the prism of their myths, they would understand that their control of the Palestinians is not "occupation" but subjugation, and that Israel is the only state in the Western, democratic world that maintains an apartheid system. If the two parties were to at least understand that both communities were destined to live side by side forever, and that one community could not eliminate the other, the conflict would be ripe for a solution.

The problem is that it is difficult if not impossible to predict the conflict's "point of ripeness" in advance. It seems that only a historian, after the fact, can describe the process of maturation based on events that have already occurred. The need for the ripening of conditions, without which there is no chance of finding a solution, explains why "plans for a settlement," which are raised before the conditions are ripe, are not applicable. The parties do not examine them based on their value as means to settle the conflict, but on their correspondence to their absolute values. Inasmuch as all such

plans are based on a compromise that would require the concession of "immeasurable matters," they are rejected.

There is no advantage to presenting theoretical solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian intercommunal conflict. This conflict, like other ethnic-national conflicts everywhere in the world, has only two options for an agreed solution: a vertical or a horizontal division. A vertical division entails a geopolitical separation and the creation of two mono-ethnic entities. This is a surgical solution whose advantages are clear. However, it is particularly difficult to apply peacefully. Such a solution is applied only when an outside enforcement power imposes it on the quarrelling parties, or as a result of war. Almost all attempts to divide a sovereign state fared badly and were crushed at the cost of much blood.

The second theoretical alternative entails the division of authorities along ethnic lines in a sovereign state based on a federal structure or ethnic autonomy and a charter of rights anchored in legislation. Such a horizontal division would require of the two communities a minimal willingness to cooperate. Previous attempts to apply a horizontal division are also discouraging. They succeed only when the ethnic groups have a clear interest in preserving the integrity of the state, in which case they are willing to compromise on ethnic symbols of identification and freedom of expression.

All plans to solve the problem of the land of Israel—a Palestinian state, autonomy, "annexation," "federation," and "Gaza first"—fall into the vertical or horizontal category. Given the present situation of the conflict, they are unacceptable, impractical, or unseemly to one or both parties.

Recognition of the processes of "ripening" leads to the conclusion that the customary approach to a solution is inapplicable, and that, in lieu of it, the "process approach" should be adopted. Such an approach involves a continuous effort to contend with the constraints of the changing reality without searching for shortcuts to a final solution. The approach of a cumulative solution is difficult for those who are trained in analytical thought based on theoretical models, and also for radicals on the left and the right. However, adherence to radical outlooks actually entrenches the status quo.

The goal of an extended process is to help create conditions that will promote the maturation of the conflict. Because maturation is a protracted process, the parties to the conflict have to decide at each point in time whether the price of continuing the conflict is greater than the price of changing it, and whether this change should be forced or by agreement. A protracted process is therefore based in the mire of reality. It has no agreed upon, defined, final objective. On the contrary, it assumes that the two parties have conflicting final objectives, and it does not require any agreement on any goal. Progress is not measured by proximity to a specific, final goal, but by the essence of any agreement that is achieved, even on

a minor matter. Any agreement is valuable because it makes the parties understand that something cannot be obtained at a given point in time, or cannot be obtained at all, or can be obtained but is impossible to apply.

A gradual process serves several objectives: First, it creates a discussion group composed of the two parties, which creates symmetry, at least temporarily. Second, step-by-step progress creates trust, which is a vital component in purposeful negotiations. Third, a gradual process presents the parties with alternatives which they can consider and accept.

The concession of a final, messianic goal is perceived as a defeat, and one who preaches it is branded a pessimist who spreads a defeatist mood. However, it is precisely a willingness to wallow in reality and experience its dullness wherein lies an optimistic message. Such willingness testifies to courage to face the existential problem, which is: In the land of Israel, there will always be two national collectives. They themselves will determine their future. If they fail to fashion coexistence between themselves, they will destroy all that is good and beautiful in each other's cultures and decree their destruction. There are no winners or losers in intercommunal conflicts.

AL-AHRAM Chides Kuwaiti Ingratitude

92AF0017A Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 27 Sep 91
p 11

[Editorial by Muhammad Zayd; "Sorry, Brothers"]

[Text] In all frankness, let me say from the beginning, I didn't choose this headline, "Sorry, Brothers," out of a desire to lighten the vehemence of a bitter tale. I find it rising like a volcano in my heart, violently pushing my pen to abandon intolerable silence.

The headline I chose is not the "suitable opening" I would have liked. But it expresses the shame of the painful feelings at work inside my heart which—after losing patience—was no longer able to hold them in.

The headline "Sorry, Brothers" is only the exaggerated politeness to which blunt Egyptian journalism resorts when addressing people who are supposed to be brothers.

I confess that I fought myself for a long time, in order that my pen would not break loose from its reins, to rebel against silence, out of my consideration for the delicacy and sensitivity of the situation, and out of consideration for the efforts of the Egyptian leadership to heal the Arabs' deep wound. At the same time, I hoped that the days would come quickly with Kuwaiti stances and measures to change my bad outlook on my brothers, and to confirm to me that they are our brothers in fact, not in name only, that they would evaluate practically what their Egyptian brothers did for them in the years of construction before and in the hard battle for liberation afterwards.

But what has happened and is still happening with them, and I see it now, after applying a great deal of patience and "vision" to give my pen the excuse to set off immediately, concealed in my heart, in a personal expression of a purely private opinion—it is not and does not claim to have the slightest connection to any "official policy" in any form. It is, first and last, the view of an ordinary citizen. Do not blame any government for it. And these are the words of a free man. No newspaper published in a free climate (unknown in the Arab region) could question them.

To go back now to a former position—I don't like to go back to it, because it pains me to the core—a position that depresses me and nearly chokes me. It is a position of the historic days after Kuwait was liberated from the Iraqi usurper by Egyptian heroes who resisted, and achieved their mission of doing the impossible and penetrating the trenches and the blazing gunfire. The commanders of the coalition forces admitted that this was one of the most difficult missions. Now I will recall the first Kuwaiti reactions, in case they have forgotten. They were quick to thank other brothers, though they left out thanks to Egypt. Official statements competed with one another to fill pages expressing their recognition and gratitude for the exertions of the other Arab forces. They [other Arab forces] had the goodness to take part in the "symbol" more than they did in having the practical effect of the Egyptian forces. This is apart from the initiative of sending long telegrams of gratitude to the alliance's Western forces, giving them all the credit. And when some began to feel somewhat ashamed, a few coerced words of gratitude slipped out for the Egyptian forces in the heat of battle. We remember that on various occasions they printed them in their "news briefs" pages. All this is besides the Kuwaiti media's constant lauding of the Kuwaiti heroics that liberated the land. They avoid mentioning the Egyptian stand except fleetingly. Egyptians noticed all this at the time, and with bitterness.

Even the recent "visit of thanks" to Egypt came after constant visits of thanks to all of the Gulf rulers. Their support for Kuwaiti rights was definitive, as with their Arab brothers, and also their fear for the security of their countries in the face of the expansionist ambitions of the twentieth century's Iraqi aggressor.

It is certain that "the Egyptian state" has not waited and will never wait for thanks for a national duty carried out as the result of a principled stand, always victorious for truth and justice.

But "the Egyptian people" had expected the judiciousness of human—not angelic—feelings would tender them thanks and gratitude before others, for the people stood united as one man behind their political leadership, which tried hard and did everything in its power to bring the aggressor back to his senses. Our commitment was to protect Arab blood. And when the aggressor's ears were closed, we did not find an alternative to taking an

active and effective role in expelling him from the Arab land that an Arab brother had attacked.

Contrary to what the Egyptian people expected, their ears were assaulted by many painful and irresponsible things coming from some brothers, with the same old lofty melody, the same greatness and pride and haughtiness. All their special peculiarities quickly came back to them after other people had returned their land to them, and the people who had restored their land to them were the first to have their feelings hurt. Some of the brothers were even so bold as to say, in a moment of insanity, "Why should we die, when others will die for us for money!"

Then came the strange "Kuwaiti position" regarding the case of the Egyptians who had gone hoarse asking for permission, even for a few days, to save the possessions in their locked apartments in Kuwait, to recover their suspended rights there. The press tried constantly, continuously, pleading with Kuwaiti officials to respond to this just request; to allow the Egyptian former workers to enter Kuwait with temporary permits to settle their business, just as the Syrians and Lebanese had done before them. But the deceived press listened to honeyed promises. The official zigzagged as a fox zigzags, and this regrettable position remained until the victims thought the faithful Egyptian press was part of the deceit against them. After reading the good news, they hurried to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo to find that the promises had evaporated. They were calmly told that it was only "newspaper talk."

Things have stayed this bad for some time now, up until the recent formation of an Egyptian-Kuwaiti committee to organize the granting of permits to enter Kuwait for a limited time to take care of outstanding business, with the same provisions the press had been demanding all along!

But even after our brothers consented to do what they should have done on their own—to safeguard the rights and honor of a brother—came the number of permits the Kuwaiti authorities condescended to issue. So far, less than 330 permits have been issued in response to 1,224 applications submitted to the embassy and sent to Kuwait. The authorities have denied 615 applications, some on the grounds that the applicants were workers who were unable to prove the existence of their apartments in Kuwait.

I don't think it requires much intelligence to figure this out. Employers housed every group of workers in a camp, or a single room, in return for a living allowance deducted from their pay. People looking for a crust of bread, happy under any conditions, budgeted and spent within their means in order to save up the fruits of their labor and exile. Most of them deposited most of their savings with their employer, who was considered a kind of older brother. Is this well-known situation a fair excuse for preventing them from obtaining entry permits to reclaim their savings and what possessions they might

have had, however humble their value? And, if this hindrance continues to prevent them from entering Kuwait with permits specifically invalid for work, would they be able to file suit outside Kuwait to win their rights inside Kuwait?

All of this gives me a nerve-wracking feeling, because the issuing of entry visas to Kuwait—even after it was all arranged—is not occurring in the brotherly spirit I had hoped for. It is almost like pulling teeth, which I detest—or like begging, which I reject.

This is because of what I heard, and which pains me, about the strange treatment of Egyptians brought by Kuwait to work there. This includes holding salaries for four months. There are many who have still not signed a work contract, and thus do not know exactly what their situation is in that brotherly country.

Finally we come to the 71.56 million Kuwaiti dinar loan offered by the Kuwait Development Fund for a project to establish a bank to fund projects for returnees from Kuwait and Iraq. They are the victims of the original Kuwaiti calamity. The government of their home country, Egypt, took the initiative and welcomed them by offering them what help it could. They intensified the terrible consequences on the Egyptian economy because of their support for right and justice.

In light of this indisputable fact, the Kuwaiti loan came accompanied by unsuitable conditions, and the representatives of the Egyptian people found it to be a violation of Egyptian dignity. They decided, to put it politely, to "postpone consideration" of the loan, which actually meant total rejection of it.

Parliament had every right, every right, to this proud and dignified decision. In the agreement presented to Parliament, the lenders stipulated that the Egyptian Government would be the guarantor of the loan and that no one has the right to reject any terms of the agreement, or to adhere to non-fulfillment of any of the loan conditions for any reason whatsoever! Furthermore, they require that private correspondence with the Kuwait Development Fund have total immunity!

Although they did not leave a grace period for beginning to repay the loan, not even one day, they imposed an interest rate of 1.5 percent. It so happens that Parliament had dealt with a Japanese loan agreement which mandated a 1 percent interest rate. Foreigners, then, were more obliging than brothers!

Now I will close with a frank declaration—with no prompting from anyone—of my bad feelings towards the officials of Kuwait. Do not blame anyone else for sharing it if they have not expressed it yet. Feelings of pained bitterness at discovering "the truth about Kuwait" with my own eyes, so difficult to mask with brotherly pretensions effective in prettying up a picture with features not its own!

I say that all this sorrow overcame me due to what every Egyptian has experienced in the way of brotherly ingratitude and what I consider the destiny of Egyptians. In spite of this, I do not at all imagine, nor does any Egyptian imagine, that Egypt will ever change its policy. It will never be anything but the offer of Arabism and adherence to its values and principles. Just as no Egyptian expects his Egyptian leadership to do anything but keep always to its national path, which allows no neglect, however slight, of the strength of character, nobility, and Arabism of Egypt and the Egyptians.

PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS

Analysis of PLO Infighting, Relations With Territories

92AE0023B Jerusalem AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI
in Arabic 21 Sep 91 pp 17-19

[Article: "At PNC Table: Bureaucracy, Relationship Between Occupied Territories and Outside; Introducing Change to PLO Institutions, Other Issues"]

[Text] In this issue and the previous one, we dealt with the imminent meeting of the Palestinian National Council [PNC], the highest legislative body of the Palestinian people, from a variety of angles, although the main concern of everything that has been written has been the PNC's responsibility in meeting the challenges facing our people at this stage. In this analysis, we will deal with the PLO's internal situation and all its institutions, basing our discussion on the self-evident premise that the new international situation arising from the collapse of the cold war and in the wake of the Gulf war dictates that changes be introduced to the PLO and its various institutions so that it may be in a position to meet all the challenges at this stage and the next one.

We begin first with the observations that we have noted in AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI, be it in an independent article or as part of an analysis of the past year and beyond, and then we will turn our attention to some other aspects.

Disparate Statements, Positions

We have noticed and sensed—and we say this candidly—that the PLO's Executive Committee and the officials associated with it in one way or another, have failed to act as one body covering a unified position, to the extent that sometimes officials used to make conflicting statements about sensitive and important issues.

In this connection, there appeared to be some sort of race to meet with the mass media and give press interviews or make statements. Meanwhile, the PLO media spokesman has been banished or shoved aside in the midst of the many self-proclaimed media spokesmen. We have frequently cited this phenomenon and the disparate positions and statements that have left us and our people confounded, particularly in the occupied

territories. In AL-BAYADIR, we have repeatedly called upon Palestinian chairman Abu-'Ammar to put a stop to this phenomenon, saying: "Spare us these disparate statements and positions."

In recent times, such disparity manifested itself in a troubling and disconcerting fashion during and immediately after the Gulf war. It was also manifested by a "Palestinian source's" disavowal of statements attributed to one official or another, and by the view that these statements are strictly personal. Even this view reflects a state of disarray and failure to act as one body, not to mention its negative and disconcerting impact on our people.

We have meshed this situation into the positions of the factions that flock under the PLO's banner. Every one of these factions is quick to adopt its own position on one boundary or another, a situation that is unacceptable within a unionist framework such as the PLO, to say nothing of its impact on the PLO's political position at the Arab and international levels.

At first glance, this matter may seem marginal. A deeper look at it, however, reveals that it is a substantive issue pertaining to the fact that the PNC, in its upcoming session, must outline a course of action for the Executive Committee, and that strict rules and regulations must be laid down for this purpose.

This is what we have repeatedly said in AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI. What we have failed to say in this context is that, over the last year or so, statements have been made and positions have been declared reflecting an unreasonable and unacceptable precipitancy. For, when an incident or a development occurs in the region, the world, or locally, officials hasten to declare a position on it in a statement to a news agency or the mass media, to the extent that different or not so different positions are declared by some PLO officials before the official statement or official position is issued.

This impact of such differing positions and statements may be discerned in a number of lead editorials in newspapers published in the occupied territories, or in the confusion manifested in positions put forth by these newspapers. Another point that can be added in this connection is the delay in issuing an official statement or position for no apparent reason or justification.

Such disparity, with all the attendant observations, ought to be put on the PNC's agenda for the upcoming session so that it may adopt a decisive position on it and put an end to it. This is undoubtedly associated with the "upcoming Executive Committee elements."

Relationship Between the Occupied Territories and the Outside

This matter is not marginal. Indeed, it is substantive and crucial, not only at this stage, but throughout the history of the Palestinian cause. This issue, however, has not been accorded the essential attention it needs, and since

it is very difficult to talk in detail about deficiencies alone, we will note here a number of observations:

First observation: The patent decentralization of dealings between the occupied territories and the outside, and the subjection of the strong "center's" dealings inside and outside the occupied territories. Add to that the rivalry we have sensed between some officials outside the territories to enhance their political standing on the inside; a rivalry which, in some cases—if not most—had negative results.

This "situation" has prompted some "merchants," in the literal sense of the word, to ride the tide in the occupied territories and reap material benefits in a way that no man and no conscience can accept. It has happened, however, because of the rivalry over the occupied territories that made the matter seem a question of individuals; a question of political existence.

The answer to this is to create a clear centralism made up of qualified, and more important, sincere and dedicated individuals.

Second observation: Familial and personal relationships between people inside and outside the territories have at some point had a direct impact, in one way or another, on the relationship between the inside and the outside. In some cases, the precepts of qualifications, competence, and loyalty have been dropped in favor of other precepts.

While the role of familial or personal relationships may be acceptable some of the time, it is unacceptable and has a negative impact most of the time.

Third observation: The occupied territories may be in need of politicians to practice politics in its various forms. Such a need, however, must be governed by many factors. It may have—indeed, it has had—an impact on a number of persons who have been driven to seclusion, thus forfeiting their energies and capabilities, to say nothing of the rivalry that has cropped up to play this political role in a very bad manner.

Fourth and final observation: In the relationship between the inside [occupied territories] and the outside, there are many complaints from the inside about the conduct of some officials on the outside. We believe that some officials have heard about them or are aware of them, and this reflects negatively on the inside.

We should note these few simple but substantive observations, and should include it on the PNC's agenda. We call for the creation of a central body outside the territories to handle relations with the inside and to overcome all previous errors and excesses.

PNC's New Composition

We believe that new international and regional changes that are not over yet—and it seems will not be over for the next few years—have been accorded greater importance to world "parliaments" than in the past. This

importance is expected to grow during the next few years, dictating the introduction of changes to the PNC's composition, in view of the following:

First, the PNC's composition, as well as many of the roles it has played so far, stem from a stage that preceded the Palestinian situation. We say 'preceded' because many basic and significant changes have also occurred in the Palestinian arena and in the modus operandi. These changes spontaneously prescribe changes in the PNC's composition and role.

Second, throughout the long years of its existence in the present form, the "PNC's role" has been limited to a specific period, namely, when the council is in session, whereas it is supposed to be given, through formations created within it, a political role to play at all times to allow it to demonstrate a political dynamism at all local, Arab, and international levels, or, in other words, to stamp out the bureaucracy encumbering its members to make them feel that their role is not limited to council meetings only, but is always active and effective at all times.

Third, whether we like it or not, new global conditions require that an active role be given the PNC through the introduction of changes as an efficacious, pragmatic, and innovative response to these conditions. This can be done by introducing changes, including radical ones.

Fourth, there is no doubt that the Palestinian people's situation precludes the holding of PNC elections. This inability to hold elections prompts us to say that there is a pressing need to reelect PNC members, and to distance ourselves from the clannish rationale and other similar political clannishness.

The introduction of marginal—and more importantly—substantive changes to the PNC's composition are essential and inevitable in the interest of constructive and total harmony with Palestinian developments during the past years and global developments in the last year. Without that, the outcome will be negative.

Stamping Out Bureaucracy and Introducing Change to Agencies

Many PLO institutions are in need of revitalization. This may be achieved by stamping out bureaucracy and putting an end to the position-for-life phenomenon, as though such positions are private property, a situation that automatically leads to bureaucracy and the emergence of the negative aspects with which many PNC members are familiar.

Conversely, there are many Palestinian capabilities that have hitherto been ignored because certain institutions have been monopolized by one or a few individuals who have a perennial fear of being replaced.

Our intention is not to set bounds here, but rather to maintain that changes must be introduced to all PLO institutions in keeping with spirited action and Palestinian, Arab, and international developments.

In this connection, we feel that a permanent oversight board ought to be formed to monitor the actions and progress of all institutions and bodies. And since an oversight board is not much different from a judicial board, a judicial board must be created at a certain level to hold accountable the derelicts and abusers of power.

We should submit these issues and points to the PNC in its next session in the hope that they might set the ground for debate and dialogue in the pursuit of change.

Hamas Spokesman on Peace Process, PLO

91AE0625A AL-SAHWAH in Arabic 22 Aug 91 pp 4, 7

[Article by 'Ali Abu-al-Nasr al-Rashid: "Representative of Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement 'Hamas': The American-Jewish Scenario for Peace Is Betrayal of Our Future Generations"]

[Text] At a time when debate is intensifying over American initiatives for peace between Arabs and Jews through the so-called peaceful settlement of the Arab-Jewish conflict;

At a time when the American secretary of state is intensifying efforts towards this Jewish-Christian design in the face of deep Arab and Islamic silence and inaction;

At this time, we thought it appropriate to interview the Muslim Palestinian voice that previously spurned U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338 and rejected the concept of land for peace, which the Palestine National Council [PNC] approved in 1988 and as a result of which, abandoned the armed struggle which used to be its essence.

In face of successive capitulative designs, this Muslim voice emphasizes that the Palestinian cause is Islamic and that no authority is empowered to cede one inch of Palestinian land. He views the American peace initiative as a betrayal of our future generations and believes that the Arab peoples shall pay the price of their meekness and silence.

The Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine is in the mainstream of the world Islamic movement and the Palestinian organization most popular in Palestine. It is also the closest to and the most influential on the intifadah, which is about to enter its fourth year.

The following is a candid interview with Hamas representative Ibrahim Ghushah, who discussed its position on the American peace initiative and many other issues of interest to the various segments of the Palestinian people.

Settlement or Liquidation?

[AL-SHAWAH] International efforts continue in search of a blueprint for reconciliation between the Arabs and the Zionist entity. It is common knowledge that Hamas is essentially opposed to ceding land for peace and has rejected U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. Would you

elaborate on its stance towards the peace initiatives that have intensified lately, especially after getting the nod from Arab confrontation states? What will its position be if the PLO agrees to some such plan?

[Ghushah] First, we will discuss the peaceful "settlement" which could have been more aptly called "liquidation." Viewed as a whole, the Palestinian cause is that of a people whose land has been occupied and whose citizens have been disenfranchised, persecuted, exterminated, and tormented for more than 70 years. A people subjected to the Palestinian experience would have to fight to recover its land and regain its standing. The Jews who came to Palestine to create the Zionist entity are essentially viewed as a usurping enemy to whom not one inch of Palestine shall be surrendered, especially since this land was conquered by the Muslim forefathers and was visited by Muhammad even before that. Thousands of the companions [Muslims] have been martyred on its soil. It is a Muslim Arab land and no authority has the competence to cede one inch of it because it is an "Islamic endowment [waqf]." This is essential. The Hamas Movement, which is in the mainstream of the world Islamic movement, therefore considers Palestine to be an Islamic cause whose liberation is the religious duty of all Muslims. The Palestinian people is the spearhead of such liberation. We are not claiming to our people on the inside [occupied territories] that the creation of a [Palestinian] state will be easy or quick. Rather, we maintain that there is a difficult road ahead and that martyrs and sacrifices are called for.

Our fight with the Jews will span generations, as did the Crusades. We will be no less persistent or valorous than the Algerians, who fought for more than 30 years, or than any other peoples.

Relinquishing Armed Struggle

On the other hand, have the Jews anything to offer us? The PLO, as part of the Palestinian peace initiative of 1988, entered into dialogues with the U.S. and with the Jews, and made many, many concessions. It recognized the Jews, ceded 78 percent of the land of Palestine, and gave up the armed struggle. Shamir's response at the time was that he would not give up one inch of the "promised land" which extends from the river to the [Mediterranean] Sea. When asked in the Israeli Knesset which river he meant he said: "The Euphrates." The Jews cede nothing. This Palestinian strategy has been put to the test and found terribly lacking. We harvested nothing but wind, as the saying goes.

We would have expected our brothers in the PLO to learn a lesson and return to their original platforms and demands. The liberation of Palestine was the original Fatah platform in 1948. As far as we are concerned, we reject the rationalization that the Arab position has collapsed. The quest is to improve the situation, not cede our rights and land. The Jews will offer no more than self-rule for a while, since the relocation is ongoing. By this, I mean the dispersion of the Palestinian people to

Jordan and other countries. This is the Jewish Zionist strategy. [Israel] receives an average of 1,000 Soviet Jews a day. Before them were the Falashas, of whom 18,000 were airlifted within 36 hours. Those immigrants will replace the dislocated Palestinians. This is the real Zionist strategy of the Jews, which must be challenged, not met with concessions, recognition of the Jews, and normalizing relations with them. Consequently, we consider the peace initiative and the American-Jewish scenario to be a criminal betrayal of the rights of future generations, because we would be selling them and their future short. The Jewish threat is not limited to the Palestinians. It is true that the Palestinian people has been paying the price for 70 years, but now all the Arab peoples will also pay.

The People Will Say 'No'

If the PLO agrees to participate in the peace conference scheduled for 10 Oct 91—which is not a conference at all, but a ceremonial opening session immediately after which negotiations will begin. This is an objective that the Jews have been pressing for since 1948 and they are about to achieve it. I call for rejecting this conference and so do all Palestinians inside and outside [the occupied territories]. We are positive that this would be corroborated by any plebiscite polling the Palestinian people on this conference and on direct negotiations. Domestic polls definitely indicate that our people reject the Zionist entity and refuse to cede Palestinian land.

We are certain that our Palestinian people, through its blessed intifadah, will persist in forcefully saying 'No' in order to foil this perilous conspiracy. But we want the Muslim Arab peoples to stop standing on the sidelines. They should tell their rulers that this is serious business that approaches heresy in Islam. It should be foiled and the intifadah of the Palestinian people should be supported with all the power that those peoples can muster.

Should Intifadah Be Sustained?

[AL-SHAWAH] The Palestinian intifadah is almost four years old. Some of those who have evaluated it hint that there is no point in sustaining it because, as they suggest, it has failed to gain momentum and has had a negative impact on the Palestinian economy. How do you in Hamas respond to this? Do you feel, in light of the peace initiatives that are being forcefully advanced these days, that the intifadah should carry on?

[Ghushah] We in Hamas seriously question the timing of this intifadah evaluation, which coincided with Baker's arrival for the sixth trip of his shuttle diplomacy. Why didn't this come up before? Because of malicious intentions towards the intifadah and the Palestinian cause, we think. We are all for evaluations if they are scholarly and objective. Everyone should stop after a while to look back at his work, evaluate it, and ponder problems and means of surmounting them.

That is logical and legitimate. The intifadah is constantly evaluating itself. No national struggle or liberation

movement is devoid of some negatives. One such negative is the question of dealing with Palestinians who deal with the Zionist enemy. The issue of strikes and their impact on the economy is moot, because they last only a few days a month and have become part of the Palestinian people's daily routine.

As to the issue of covering one's face, we are aware that some Jews have also taken to covering their faces as they beat on Muslim Palestinian youths. The answer, however, is not to ban face coverings, because they are of value and enable young people to undertake numerous missions. They won't be able to take action with their faces exposed to enemy agents. However, by coordinating among the activist segments of the intifadah, i.e., between Hamas and other Palestinian organizations on the inside, it would be possible to agree on procedures to control infiltrators and prevent acts of sabotage.

Those were some of the issues that were extensively debated and evaluated. I would like to say that the Palestinian people has suffered and endured because of the intifadah, especially in the aftermath of the Gulf war, when they were victimized by policies of starvation and unemployment. This is a fact. The answer is not to terminate the intifadah, but to deal with symptomatic problems. The primary role of the intifadah is to restore respect for the Palestinian, the Arab, and the Muslim. At one time, after the mosque massacre and when Hamas initiated, and then escalated, the "War of Daggers", the Jews were forced to close the "Green Line" for a week. The Jews now walk in fear, not knowing where they will next be hit. Such a climate could never be created through the efforts of Arab regimes, but it was successfully accomplished by the youth of the intifadah. It is the cry of our people on the inside that we will persevere as long as we have hearts that beat and youths who can fight.

Disagreements on Agenda

[AL-SHAWAH] There has been recent talk of disagreements between Hamas and some other Palestinian organizations in the occupied territories. Those are old disagreements that explode daily. Is it not time to coordinate with the Unified Leadership of the intifadah and with other Palestinian organizations, at least on intifadah matters?

[Ghushah] I would like to clarify our position on the political strategy of the PLO and the United Leadership. Hamas has rejected that strategy because, as I mentioned previously, it recognizes the Jewish enemy, cedes 78 percent of Palestinian lands, and abandons the armed struggle.

But even though we have rejected the political strategy, we are careful to close our ranks in the face of the common Zionist enemy. [Internal] discords can only serve the interests of the enemy and add to the woes of our people. It is one of our primary objectives to avoid any such friction, but certain organizations challenge Hamas as it calls on our young people to grit their teeth

and ignore provocations. We noticed that provocations increase when surrender initiatives are on the table, as if the idea were to induce conflicts that would stop the intifadah and give them a pretext to pass surrender solutions.

One such unfortunate incident occurred in Nabulus last 5 May between Hamas and Fatah. It was triggered by dissent among the various Fatah militias themselves. Fatah has more than one militia—the youth agency, the Fatah organization, and the security apparatus—and they argue among themselves. That led to provoking Hamas, which was forced to deal with certain Fatah individuals who are suspect to start with. We then contacted our Fatah brothers and were able, in the interest of national unity and the survival of the intifadah, to quickly contain the incident internally and externally.

Four Percent Instead of 40 Percent

[AL-SHAWAH] Efforts continue to give Hamas representation on the PNC, especially in view of efforts to rejuvenate that body next September. Are there any new developments or offers, either by the PNC or by the PLO, that would induce you to accept representation on that council? If not, may we know your reasons for rejecting that offer?

[Ghushah] Hamas was invited more than a year ago to attend the PNC's constituent committee. It responded at the time with a memorandum setting forth its platform, precepts, and conditions for participation. I will not discuss that memo here, but one such condition was to hold elections for representatives of the Palestinian people inside and outside Palestine. That meant votes by 6 million Palestinians on the inside, as well as on the outside. We stated that we, as an Islamic movement, could not possibly join the PNC within the framework of the Algiers resolutions recognizing the Jewish enemy.

A similar invitation was received this year from the Council president, his beatitude Shaykh 'Abd-al-Hamid al-Sa'ih. We did consider the invitation and conveyed our willingness to join the council once elections are held. We underscore the elections issue because we honestly believe that free and honest elections inside and outside [the territories] would give Hamas no less than 40 percent of the seats on the council. We told the brethren that should elections be impossible for one reason or another, that percentage, at a minimum, would be the weight we carry on the Palestinian street. The Palestinian people, increasingly convinced of the viability of Hamas, is rallying behind it more and more. This was proven in recent Chamber of Commerce elections in the town of al-Khalil, where Hamas won six out of 11 seats, compared with only four for the PLO. An independent was elected to the remaining seat.

Elections at the Accountants Association in Gaza resulted in seven seats out of nine for the Islamic movement. The PLO gained only two.

The Islamic trend has grown and is sweeping the land, as indicated more recently by [elections at] university student associations, the Engineers' Association, and most other unions. We demand elections, therefore, and want this people to express its opinion on intellectual and political issues. We would accept [the outcome] even if we gained only 5 percent of PNC seats. Should we gain a large number of seats, as is likely, then we would work to change its political agenda. We say it loud and clear—we shall modify the Palestine Manifesto, which unfortunately does not mention Islam, to make it an Islamic proclamation.

In short, we shall comply with all the demands of Islam, but within the context of a consultative democracy. We consider this to be our due, but unfortunately, we were recently offered not 40 percent of the Palestine National Council, but a mere four percent. Such an offer is an insult to Hamas, an insult to the Islamic movement, and an insult to the youths of the intifadah, because 60 percent of intifadah missions are carried out by Hamas youths.

We Reject 'Selection' Process

It is worth mentioning here that the Hamas youths have so far suffered thousands of injuries and arrests and account for more than 300 out of about 1,000 intifadah martyrs. Hamas sustained more than 5,000 arrests in the latest drive by the Zionist enemy. This is the weight we carry, and yet this individual offers to give us only 20 of 450 seats on the council. As I said, [we reject the concept of] selecting representatives to the council. We believe that the enlightened Palestinian people would refuse to allow any committee or group of members, no matter who they are, to decide who should represent the Palestinian people on its council and who should fill its 450 seats.

The point we are making is that we seek a dialogue with the PLO on the elections. The PLO has so far rejected this idea but it could, should we be able to persuade it, harness its embassies and its contacts with the world and in the United Nations to get a resolution passed, in the current context of human rights and legitimate international authority, to help the [Palestinian people] elect its own representatives and express its opinion on world initiatives and PLO strategies. That was accomplished under different conditions in Namibia. The PLO itself makes a similar demand when it calls for a plebiscite to determine whether the Palestinian people wish to be represented by the PLO and whether that should be under U.N. supervision.

No Alternative to Elections

[AL-SHAWAH] Do you believe this to be the final word—yours and theirs—on the matter, or are you continuing to seek a compromise?

[Ghushah] We received a message from brother Abu-'Ammar, for which we thank him. We informed him that our stance towards the PNC's constituent committee

remains unchanged, and that our stance also remains unchanged towards the PNC, and that there is no alternative to elections for the proper representation of the Palestinian people. As for dialogues, we are willing to talk with brother Abu-'Ammar and with the PLO. We are already in discussions with the brethren at Fatah, with whom we met more than once last month. We talk with them in an attempt to acquaint them first-hand with our viewpoints. We also try to listen to our brethren and hear their proposals. We believe that such dialogues should be maintained. Many are the issues we are ready to discuss with the PLO, with Fatah, and with brother Abu-'Ammar; including steps to frustrate the conspiracy against the Palestinian cause and to boost the intifadah at any time and in any place.

War of Daggers

[AL-SHAWAH] In the context of the Palestinian intifadah, what differentiates Hamas operations from those by other Palestinian organizations?

[Ghushah] Hamas is differentiated by its religious orientation. In other words, it is driven by the Islamic faith, which distinguishes it from other intifadah activities whose objectives may be to improve the negotiating posture or to heat up the situation for some purpose or another.

The Palestinian people is aware that Hamas takes its quest seriously and that it is strictly dedicated to its mission. The people are getting themselves ready on that basis. Hamas is also very clear in alerting the people to the long road ahead and to the need for sacrifice and martyrdom.

Hamas has initiated certain confrontations that propelled the intifadah. One such example is the "War of Daggers" that succeeded in instilling fear in the Jewish enemy in the aftermath of the mosque massacre of October 1990.

Gazan Notables Expound Views on Hamas

92AE0023A Jerusalem AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI in Arabic 7 Sep 91 pp 17-24

[Article by Rashad al-Madani and Hani Abu-Zayd: "Current Stage Most Critical for Palestinian Cause, Especially After Gulf War"]

[Text] As part of its weekly symposium, AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI held the first one at its bureau in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, 28 August 1991, at 1600. This symposium was attended by Prof. 'Abd-al-Latif 'Ubayd, Prof. 'Abd-al-Fattah Hamid, Dr. Zuhni al-Wahidi, and Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar. The symposium dealt with several key and sensitive issues, including:

- Efforts to secure the participation of all Palestinian factions in the next PNC [Palestine national Council] session, including the Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas];

- What the PNC is required to do;
- Palestinian representation in the proposed peace conference and what PLO non-participation means.

The current stage is the most critical stage the Palestinian cause has gone through, especially in the wake of the Gulf war and the emergence of different political initiatives and endeavors that have given rise to the idea of a peace conference to be held this coming October. Therefore, it was decided to convene the PNC in the middle of the night with the primary aim of reaching a final position for the PLO, and defining the nature of Palestinian participation in the proposed peace conference. Shortly before the session was convened, Palestinian efforts were undertaken with a view to securing full participation of all Palestinian factions, including the Hamas Movement. In this regard, Shaykh 'Abd-al-Hamid al-Sa'ih, chairman of the PNC, in an interview with the Jordanian newspaper AL-SHA'B, emphasized the gravity of the stage the Palestinian cause is going through, saying this stage requires all Palestinian factions and the brothers in Hamas to unify their position and take part in the upcoming PNC meetings.

The first question we posed in our symposium was: What are your comments on what the PNC chairman said in his interview?

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] We salute you all for responding to the invitation and for participating in this symposium, thus underscoring your sense of responsibility toward our people's cause, particularly at this critical and important juncture.

[Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar] In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful, and praise be to God. First, we must assess the peace process objectively, based on a clear analysis of its various factors in a way that makes it clear and easy for us to understand how decisions are made. The elements of the Palestinian cause, as set forth in the peace conference, have several factors or aspects:

1. the Palestinian side; Israel; the Arab regimes; the international community; and the judge [America] nominated to ensure the implementation of the agreement.

The Palestinian Side:

We find that the Palestinian view of the conference, with its format and goals and the proposals of the other elements—Israel, the Arab regimes, the international community, and the judge—we find that Palestinian society is disunited on this idea. It is clear that the Palestinian left has refused to stay the course with respect to the Baker meetings. Fatah has taken several steps in this regard. I am sure there are many influential elements in Fatah who do not favor going ahead with this course. The Islamic tendency has also rejected this course that, in its view and for reasons I will offer later, does not meet the minimum [conditions]. On the contrary, after the answer to this question, the gravity of Palestinian participation in such a conference will be broached.

First, the Palestinian side is not united on this matter, and neither is the PLO. If the aim behind convening the PNC at this time is to give the left a justification for taking part in this matter after it had turned it down the first time, I believe this stance is not in keeping with the nature and gravity of the stage. The Islamic party to this matter does not base its decision to join the PLO or the PNC on this stance per se. This coming stage is no reason for it to join the PNC, especially since it is fully aware of the danger involved, and that proceeding with this matter has its own dangers. So why contribute to this danger if it can offer counsel on the outside?

The question remains, why does the Islamic movement not join the PLO without linking such a decision to what might happen in the near future: the conference or other issues?

Second Factor, Israel

Israel does not really want to see the Palestinian problem solved. I asked an American embassy official about the land occupied in 1948, and he said that there will absolutely be no discussion of that, it will not be allowed. What will be discussed then? He said discussion will deal with post-1967 events.

Thus, the Israelis say no negotiations on Jerusalem, which they claim as Israel's eternal capital. They say no to withdrawal from "Greater Israel" land, meaning the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The issue of settlements is the best proof of that. Regarding the peace process outside Palestine, they say no discussions on Golan and southern Lebanon. As you know, they have their justifications. Then what will the peace conference be about? They frankly said: 'peace for peace, meaning peace in exchange for peace so that you Arabs and you Palestinians will not be attacked; you have to make peace with us.' This in itself is humiliating and cannot be tolerated. The problem is not peace for peace. The problem is a people driven from their homeland with three or four million scattered outside the occupied territories. Israel is the one placing all the obstacles. It advocates, as I have already said, and insists on a procedure that has never been and will never be followed anywhere in the world: one party insisting on naming the other party.

2. Substituting an agenda drawn up during a certain historic event, beginning the voyage in mid-stream or picking a certain time or a certain place—any one of these matters makes it absolutely impossible for anyone to imagine for a moment that Israel wants peace. Moreover, Arab regimes are now rushing to please the American master. The Arab regimes will not, at this time, endorse the Palestinian position. On the contrary, they will be a burden to the Palestinian position, as evidenced by those who have met with Baker. The idea of abolishing the Arab boycott in exchange for a freeze on, and not the removal of, Israeli settlements has been offered by King Fahd and embraced by Mubarak. Thus, Arab regimes are contriving things for America at the expense of the Palestinians. They are truly a burden on the

Palestinians, though they are supposed to champion the Palestinian people. The Arab regimes' loyalty is perfectly clear: they have attached themselves to American policy and therefore, can be detached only by America's wish. It is clear that the international community is the United Nations' community that is not fit to handle our cause because, for many long years, from 1948 to the present time, we have tried to implant our cause in the UN conscience, and the UN has failed to do anything, save for giving the Palestinian people a handful of dollars to buy flour for the refugees and nothing more.

Scores of conferences and meetings have been held, none of which have resulted in a single positive step in favor of the Palestinian people, while the whole world at the UN came together against Iraq. It passed resolutions and rallied all the world powers to destroy Iraq. Another question: Why has America, the nominated judge and the fifth factor in the game, chosen this position? Let us talk about the peace process, although our cause has been put in the White House closet for many, many years. The truth is that the judge must be fair. It is clear that the Soviet Union is staying on the sidelines and is nothing but a political decoration, which demonstrates that the superpowers are coming from the East [as published]. Therefore, the judge is not fair, and has been bribed because the Zionist power can, with all the money it has, do whatever it pleases with the American administration, hence the many standards used for the same principle. Consequently, we cannot trust America or Russia to be the judge.

These are the elements for solving the Palestinian problem surrounding the proposals that have been put forth. Consequently, the question we raise here is that these elements are either incapable, unwilling, or unfit, and proceeding with this matter will only yield evidence of incapability and injustice. Have those who are pursuing this matter studied the danger of Palestinian society's psychological reaction when it ruminates on a political farce for many long years, like [the dispute over] Taba? The psychological reaction will be intense and dangerously negative, and will need to be fully assessed. Anyone who would like examples of this can look at the state of mind of some people in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

These are the true circumstances surrounding the peace conference. Consequently, will any Islamic movement, in this climate, be willing to join the PLO to participate in this matter? I imagine this is an unsound position unless there is a real wish to change the course, and the only way to change the course is by changing the PLO's way of thinking and replacing the people at the helm. I believe that the PLO now has a greater opportunity to return to its roots, and to firmly establish its and the people's concepts. When we say a Muslim people, we mean that the seeds are present in every home. Even the secularists and leftists cannot invalidate the concept of Islam. Every house in Palestine has a growing seed, and our relationship as a Palestinian people with Islam is a firm one, albeit in varying degrees: strong ties and

marginal ties. Islamic history has taught us, however, that those who are marginally linked to Islam at one point or another are Muslim activists. There are many examples of that, including Khalid Ibn-al-Walid, 'Amr Ibn-al-'As, and the infidels who fought Islam. Then God Almighty showed them the right path and they began helping Islam and the Muslims in subsequent historic eras. Consequently, I believe the PLO ought to be thinking hard, not so much about how to get the various Palestinian factions to share the consequences of such a course, but about changing the course completely. The only way this can be done is to proclaim the course's Islamism. Sorry for taking so long.

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] We understand from what you have said that the brothers in the Islamic movements will not participate in the PNC. Let us now direct this question to Prof. 'Abd-al-Latif 'Ubayd.

['Ubayd] I am presenting my personal view here. Allow me to comment briefly on what brother al-Zahhar said, regarding his explanation of Shaykh al-Sa'ih's invitation to the left to bring it back to the PLO position to participate in the peace process. The way I understand it is that this was an invitation to all sides, including Hamas, whose views are clear to the average Palestinian, in that it refuses to have anything to do with the American peace efforts. This means that this is an advance invitation to all Palestinian parties to attend so that they may bear their momentous responsibility at this serious juncture. Allow me to pick an opening here to talk about the assessment of the regional conference. While the regional conference's assessment of the American peace efforts is what essentially determines the PLO's positions and those of other powers, I believe that American peace efforts toward convening a regional conference this October are a repugnant exploitation of the state of decline that the Arabs have been experiencing in the wake of the Gulf war. The second point is that the American administration has mastered its political plan, the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conciliation plan, and has prepared the proper climate for such a solution at the international and regional levels, taking advantage of international detente and the rift in the socialist camp to put through a solution that serves its interests and those of Israel. In other words, it looks as though it has compelled the Palestinian people themselves to face international legitimacy's challenge and to challenge the regional legitimacy—by that I mean the Arabs—while totally ignorant of the region's objective circumstances and of the socialist camp's rift and so forth, and therefore, their rejection of the current American intentions. America believes that this in itself represents a squeeze on the Palestinian position. America has charted a political course for us that gives us no choice but to select a Palestinian delegation that represents the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the exclusion of the PLO and representatives from Jerusalem, or a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, or as part of a unified Arab delegation. The right to choose is not important because it is the chaff and not the crux of the matter. The

important thing is to join the negotiations after we secure certain issues put forth for negotiation. So far, America and Israel have refused to concede a single issue put forth for negotiation between it and the Palestinian people—excuse me, it does not recognize the Palestinian people—between it and the people of the region. It believes, namely America, that the Palestinian people cannot pull out of this course.

A fourth item [as published]: There is a spontaneous Arab-Israeli agreement to hold the conference and seek the advice and consent of the American tendency. This has a clear import: that the Arab sides, the Israeli side, and the American side are the beneficiaries, for without this benefit, there would not be an advance position. So, where does such a benefit to these sides, be they the Arabs, Israel, or America, lie? Logic says that the only benefits will be at the expense of Palestinian rights. The fact that the Arab countries have easily agreed to hold the conference without defining issues or terms in favor of the Palestinian cause means that the Americans have promised these Arab regimes and Israel great gains at the end of the tunnel. If there are any gains to be made, they must be at the expense of Palestinian rights, as far as the other side is concerned. But does this mean that we should not join the conference? Staying away from the conference is viewed as cowardice or weakness. We have lost much by evading conferences. It is better for us to join the conference and, if it tries to ignore Palestinian rights, we ought to turn it into a rights platform to unmask all positions, be they Arab, Israeli, or American, and then pull out, thus undermining the position of the Arab traitors, and thwarting American and Israeli endeavors.

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] Now, let us hear what Abu-'Ala has to say.

[Prof. 'Abd-al-Fattah Hamid] I would like to comment on some of what Dr. al-Zahhar said. It is perfectly all right for us, as Palestinians inside and outside the occupied territories, to agree and disagree on political or societal matters, for disagreement is a healthy phenomenon. However, such disagreement must not lead to strife. Putting the Palestinian house in order is a basic and essential issue. Our disagreement on the peace conference or on a specific idea or issue does not mean that we should stay out of the PNC. The truth is that the basic issue on which we ought to focus is putting the Palestinian house back in order and achieving Islamic national unity. Differences of opinion always bring out the best, and therefore, it would be a good and positive thing for the Islamic movements to join the PLO, regardless of whether or not a conference will be held.

Dr. Mahmud interjected to ask about the advantages of joining the PLO.

Hamid answered: "I am diligently seeking, based on my personal view, to achieve Palestinian unity. This is an essential and fundamental question. We agree or disagree for the sake of public interest within a unified

framework. To join the PLO is to unite the Palestinian masses within a unified framework, or in other words, within the democratic process. The second point on which I would like to focus is joining and [then] pulling out of the conference. Pulling out would create a setback for the Palestinian people because this is unacceptable, politically and from a media standpoint. Consequently, if I want to join the conference, I must be fully aware of why I am doing it, or else not go at all. Pulling out of the conference is a very serious matter.

"The second question is Arab and international legitimacy. We are actually the ones calling for compliance with international legitimacy, in other words, America. We are calling for the implementation of international resolutions. In other words, America is pushing us into a corner by invoking international legitimacy. We are the ones calling for the implementation of international resolutions, and not America, who tells world public opinion: 'Come look at the Palestinians who have turned down international legitimacy.' No. We, as Palestinians, are calling for Arab and international legitimacy and demanding the implementation of UN resolutions, from Resolution 181 to the latest one.

"In the face of such positions at the international level, the arena is catering to the American epoch, at the Arab level, and our situation is 'tenuous' at the Palestinian level. The question now is: Are the Palestinian people facing a static movement? I say there has to be a political interaction with the general movement, both at the Arab and international levels.

"The Palestinian people and their leadership, represented by the PLO, must interact with the political movement within clear and well-defined constants."

Prof. 'Ubayd steps in to pose the question: "Can we gather that there have to be conditions for the PLO's participation in the conference?"

[Prof. 'Abd-al-Fattah Hamid] The truth is that we, as Palestinians, cannot impose any conditions.

[Dr. Zuhni] Within the Arab situation.

['Ubayd] Would you agree to join the conference, compelled by American and Israeli policy?

[Hamid] The truth is, brother Abu-Suhayl, that I, as a Palestinian and part of the Arab and international situation that caters to the American epoch, cannot impose any conditions and cannot impose any solutions. What I can do, as a Palestinian, is to thwart any solution that fails to fulfill a minimum level of my aspirations. We want a state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and what follows will be up to God.

['Ubayd] The conference will not give you this right. What then?

[Hamid] Here is where the Palestinian movement's dynamism, or political interaction, will join the general movement.

['Ubayd] This is not clear. According to American and Israeli conditions, you will not be given the right to set up a state. What is being proposed at this time is self-rule, and the Arabs have agreed to join the conference, and have outlined for you political courses through participation by an independent Palestinian delegation or with Jordan as part of a joint Arab delegation. These are the options you have. You have to deal with this chaff. You are not supposed to be aware of the guarantees: you have no right to set conditions or to veto!

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] So far, the question of Palestinian representation is still unclear because only the PNC has the power to find a way out of this matter.

[Hamid] Actually, I do not have the ready details. This question—and the other question, namely Palestinian representation—is a genuine and sovereign question. Otherwise, who would represent us?

['Ubayd (Abu-Suhayl)] I believe that our preoccupation with the composition of the delegation is not an essential issue. More important than that are the lines that must be drawn before the formation of the delegation. First, I must know why I am joining the conference. What are our concerns? What will I gain by joining? What rights do we have? I will not form the delegation without knowing what rights I will be accorded. I want guarantees, and will not join under conditions. I want the right to self-determination. I want the PLO. Have I secured these conditions or these givens yet? Even the PLO, as far as we know, has not been offered this. I am not making judgment without knowing what the PLO has been offered. All we see through the press is the question of the delegation's composition. Do you believe that the composition of the delegation is a step?

I do not think so, and it is not the first one. What is more important is to define the issues brought up for negotiation, and to set conditions, and then we will know the reason for our participation.

[Hamid] Amid the American situation; the international situation that is wrapped around it; the Arab situation, which caters to the American epoch; and the tenuous Palestinian situation, I am unable to impose conditions or make demands. But I can, as a Palestinian aided by Palestinian unity, foil any U.S.-imposed solution inconsistent with the minimum level of my people's aspirations.

[Boxed item] Prof. 'Abd-al-Fattah 'Abd-al-Hafiz Hamid (Abu-'Ala') was born in the village of Ashdod in 1948. He graduated from Cairo University in 1972, after which he worked until 1989 as a high school teacher in the Gaza Strip. He has been arrested four times, and was fired by the authorities after his fourth arrest. He has produced several studies, research papers, and articles published in the press inside and outside the occupied

territories. He has also participated in a number of local symposiums dealing with Palestinian issues. He has vast experience in reform and conflict- and problem-resolution. He currently runs the literacy and adult education program in the Gaza Strip.]

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] We return to the first question we raised, namely Shaykh al-Sa'ih's opinion, and the invitation he extended to Hamas and the Salvation Front to join the PNC in order to have a united Palestinian position at the peace conference. Will it be an independent delegation? Will it be part of a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation? Will it be part of an Arab delegation? The PNC will come out with proposals and resolutions that will be implemented through a unified political step combining all political trends. Dr. al-Zahhar (Abu-Khalid), at the beginning of his discourse, was of the opinion that the Islamic tendency should not join the PNC. Prof. 'Ubayd believes that all tendencies, including Hamas, should join the PNC, and Hamid agreed with him. Now, we give the floor to Dr. al-Wahidi.

[Dr. Zuhni al-Wahidi] With regard to the matter at hand, there are two courses that can be followed: a peace conference, or all factions can join the PLO.

I cannot but think that these two courses are interrelated. Let us begin with the peace conference, primarily because we seem to agree on our basic visions or conditions. The absolute American format does not contain the guarantees we have demanded and does not meet our needs. After the Gulf war, the phase of the American epoch got under way, giving rise to singular American promises bringing about Palestinian isolation in the process. Had it been an Arab or an Islamic isolation, we would have seen the oppressed joining hands. Consequently, it is a Palestinian isolation that includes all the various Islamic, national, leftist, and communist factions.

[Hamid] (Interrupting) Communism is gone, Abu-Yusuf.

[Zuhni (Abu-Yusuf)] Forever, God willing. During the first Camp David phase, we felt that we paid for it and for the withdrawal from Beirut, as well. Now we are paying for the Gulf [war] alongside our brothers in Iraq. If the international or regional conference wants to let us in—and if the Arabs come out with bilateral solutions with Israel in the form of new Camp Davids—and if it wants to give us civil administration, this will firmly implant the differences between us and make it impossible for the other factions to join. On the contrary, it will be all the more reason not to join because what the PLO has achieved in its current makeup is below human dignity. You would have no control over your properties, your land, or your sun. You must extend an invitation to Hamas and the National Salvation [Front] to join you, not only to bear the burdens of this stage, which could be deemed a failure, but to effect change and chart new strategies together. Let there be a new amendment to the

National Charter to please the brothers in Hamas and the Salvation Front. This would not be a retraction, but rather a reassessment of positions.

I remember in the mid-sixties, 1965 to 1966, when the PLO came into being, it was rejected by all the factions. It was accused of many things and we shunned it. After the 1967 defeat, we felt that we had to join it and to put it on course, whereupon it did, in fact, follow the Palestinian national trend. This stage calls for a real effort to unite the Palestinian ranks. I maintain that it is the duty, the sacred duty, of Hamas to join the PLO at this point. This is not a trap set by the PLO to compel Hamas to bear part of the negative ramifications. On the contrary, it ought to join as though, by staying away, it would be consecrating more negative ramifications. I do not think the Palestinian leadership will oppose that. It wants to see us unite into one force representing all trends, because this is the only solution to Palestinian isolation and the only way to bring pressure to bear on the Arab nation. You are now facing the battle alone, and your back is to the wall. Either you shore up the wall or you put cracks in it, and one push from you will bring it and you tumbling down. Participation in the peace conference may be possible if we receive, before joining the negotiations, a positive response to your demands and inquiries represented in the Palestinian constants: Jerusalem, land, repatriation, self-determination, and withdrawal. This would be impossible, however, unless Hamas decides to join the PLO. So, I am asking that the conference be put off until next year so as not to be, from their standpoint, under the aegis of the American victory over Iraq.

[Boxed item] Dr. Zuhni Yusuf al-Wahidi was born in 1945. He graduated from the University of Asyut School of Medicine in 1970-1971. He specialized in obstetrics and pediatrics at the University of Alexandria in 1980-81. The authorities have barred him from participating in several medical conferences. He is the chief physician with UNRWA [UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East] and now works at al-Suwaydi Hospital in the Gaza Strip.]

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] From what brothers Abu-Suhayl, Abu-'Ala, and Abu-Yusuf have said, it seems to us that they agree on the urgent need for the Islamic tendencies and the National Salvation Front to join the PNC, a view opposed by Abu-Khalid.

[Prof. 'Ubayd] (interjecting) We are not through with this point, as far as Dr. Mahmud's view is concerned.

[Zuhni] I have not heard that he opposed the idea of Islamic tendencies joining the PNC.

[Abd-al-Latif] He may have changed his mind.

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] I think, at this stage, it is obvious that the PLO is contacting Hamas and the National Salvation Front for this purpose before the PNC convenes its next session.

[Abd-al-Latif] To corroborate what Hani has said, I think that Shaykh al-Sa'ih did not extend this invitation in a vacuum before obtaining the approval of the leaders.

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] Dr. Abu-Khalid proposed a change in ideology and the replacement of some PLO leaders in order to give him a chance.

[Dr. al-Zahhar] First, I would like to comment on some issues so that the readers may have a clear picture. We have been afflicted by a disaster greater than the regionalization of the cause. Unfortunately, the PLO has consecrated the concept of regionalism, beginning with the cause's internationalism. The Ottoman Empire existed when Herzl offered Sultan 'Abd-al-Hamid to settle his debts in exchange for Palestine. He said something that is not recorded in our Arab history. He said: "I'd rather give up part of my body than give up Palestine." Then the idea of internationalizing the cause emerged during the struggle of Shaykh 'Izz-al-Din al-Qassam, a Syrian national who later went to Palestine. The cause retained its Islamic banner until Hajj Amin al-Husayni [Grand Mufti of Jerusalem] appeared on the scene, although there are other opposing theses. The internationalization of the cause was nullified with the establishment of Israel. Then came the nationalization of the cause, as put forth by 'Abd-al-Nasir: Arab nationalism as an alternative to Ottoman occupation. We will liberate the land from the [Mediterranean] sea to the river and will set up a greater Arab state from the Persian Ocean to the Gulf [as published]. This call was dropped with 'Abd-al-Nasir's downfall in 1967. Then al-Sadat appeared on the scene. He advocated the Westernization or the internationalization of the cause, saying that the cards were in America's hands. However, this logic was invalidated when the first Camp David Agreement was signed. Now, they are trying to breathe new life into it, calling it the regionalization of the cause. The PLO sanctified this idea by claiming to be the sole and legitimate representative. The Palestinian cause is not the responsibility of the PLO alone. It is a cause that touches the very essence of every Muslim's belief, and calls upon all Muslims in the Arab and Islamic worlds to fulfill their role. It is a serious cause that goes to the very core of our beliefs. The Prophet, God bless Him and grant Him salvation, said in the Prophetic tradition [al-hadith]: "Muslims are equal in blood." So, when the PLO says 'I am the sole and legitimate representative,' it disavows the Indonesian Muslims, for instance, who are fulfilling their duties toward the Palestinian cause.

The second matter is the issue of international legitimacy. Some brothers say we must not stand up to international legitimacy and Arab legitimacy. Which is more dangerous to us: to stand up to international legitimacy and Arab legitimacy at the expense of Islamic law, or to stand with Islamic law against international and Arab legitimacy?

God Almighty said: "But whosoever turns away from my message, verily for him is a life narrowed down, and We shall raise him up blind on the day of judgment." [Koran

20:124] Regarding the issue of guarantees, dear brothers, God Almighty said: "Is it not (the case) that every time they make a covenant, some party among them throw it aside?—Nay, most of them are faithless." [Koran 2:100]

Which of the guarantees Yasir 'Arafat received to get out of Beirut have been fulfilled? Did Philip Habib not sign these guarantees and did Yasir 'Arafat not repeatedly say that a believer cannot be stung by the same thing twice. Unfortunately, he has been stung by America more than once.

Regarding the idea that the Islamic movements and the Salvation Front ought to rejoin the PLO for the sake of Palestinian unity, we must differentiate, dear brother, between Palestinian unity and Palestinian truce.

[Dr. al-Wahidi] (interjecting) We are not at war with one another.

[Dr. al-Zahhar] There is a difference between keeping silent about a mistake for the purpose of creating problems and being in agreement on something by which you can appreciate my steps and I can appreciate yours. God Almighty said: "And hold fast together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you) and be not divided among yourselves." [Koran 3:103] God's rope is the Koran; it has the news of those who came before you and those who will come after you. This is serious, not a farce. It is God Almighty's rope.

We must join in order to expose and undermine the Arab regimes. Who in the Arab world, what small child, cannot denounce the lackey Arab regimes that have been clearly exposed? We do not need to join the conference to expose anyone because this has been made clear, like a human being standing naked. The other matter I would like to make clear is that the PLO actually feels that the organization must not join without conditions. These conditions say that the other tendency must retain a majority. When they were invited to join with 40 percent [of representative seats] two years ago, they refused. Why? Because they were only offered a perfunctory participation in which they would bear the responsibility of whatever happens, and would play the democracy game. Their insistence on joining the conference with a certain percentage while a certain tendency, specifically Fatah, retains harmony, is aimed at dragging them into the democracy that compels the minority to abide by the opinion of the majority, bringing the religious tendencies' conviction under siege when the adopted decision may be incompatible with their beliefs, supposedly in the interest of democracy. How can they go on?

Therefore, I believe this is not a conflict over who is running the PLO. There is a simple matter I hope the brothers at the PLO would heed: Declare the organization's Islamism in terms of course and application, without having any members from Hamas or any of the Islamic tendencies. They will receive the full and absolute support of the various Islamic tendencies, as soldiers and not as officers. The aim is not to control the organization, but to correct the PLO's course, which is

incompatible with Muslim beliefs. This is an open invitation to brother 'Abd-al-Hamid al-Sa'ih and to Mr. Yasir 'Arafat to declare Islam as the course and the constitution of the PLO, whereupon everyone in the Islamic movement will stand behind them to support them and take them by the hand. This is the way the question of joining or not joining ought to be resolved. However, if it is a matter of urging these elements to join in order to share the burdens of democracy and to abide by resolutions that are incompatible with their belief, they would not stay long, and it would be very dangerous for them to join and quit the next day. It would be better and more honorable for them to stay out than to join and then quit, because they would be viewed by the Palestinians as dissenters.

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] Now that we have heard Dr. al-Zahhar say that the PLO's course must be changed as a condition to join the PNC, do you, Dr. Mahmud, personally endorse the idea of the Islamic tendencies joining the PNC?

[Mahmud] Under these conditions?

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] Yes.

[Dr. Mahmud] And to be the minority in it?

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] We are now broaching the idea that the change you are demanding may be achieved by joining the PNC.

[Dr. Mahmud] I believe it would be a mistake for them to join at this point if they are going to be a minority forced to abide by the decision of the majority, which, in fact, would not be in keeping with their political posture.

[Dr. Zuhni] Let us go back to the matter of joining the PNC, because we will need resolutions in the next stage under which we can unite. Such resolutions will not be against religion or against Islamic principles. Even Christian members, if any, will be on the side of kinship.

[Prof. 'Abd-al-Fattah Hamid] Dr. Mahmud objects to the PLO's contention that it is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people because it has excluded the Islamic elements.

[Dr. al-Zahhar] (interrupting) I did not say that. There is a difference between Arab legitimacy and international legitimacy. I would like to enrich the concept of legitimacy and give it more of an Islamic, rather than an Arab, dimension. I have said from the start that I am against the regionalization of the cause.

[Prof. 'Abd-al-Latif] Allow me to talk briefly about the subject of internationalism. I would like to see the cause assume an international dimension because this will actually strengthen it. I am not only talking about the Palestinian people's efforts, but also about the efforts of the Arab nation and the Islamic world. Consider the current conditions in the Islamic countries of the world. We are now facing an imperialist assault and, in all honesty, I consider this regional conference to be an

imposition at this time. I do not wish to bring up the essence of the PLO for discussion because it is now under a vicious attack, and the Arabs, our brothers in blood and Islam, have given their approval in advance. We are faced with two possibilities: either refuse to join this conference until the changes put forth by Dr. Mahmud are achieved, or go along with the present reality as much as we can. We have nothing to gain presently by raising the issue of internationalization. Why? Because most of the Islamic countries right now are clinging to America's heels, and the free national and religious movements are being beaten up by all the regimes, led by the Arab ones. The American conspiracy, in the wake of or during the liquidation of the Palestinian cause, is aimed at liquidating the Islamic tendency. This is what I expect. So, if the slogan of Islamic internationalism is raised, it would be an invitation to America to harden its position and speed up its efforts to implement its designs before this sleeping giant has a chance to awaken, because this giant is being beaten up by all the regimes of the world. So, by making the issue contingent on this position, I would be giving Israel what it wants, thus further complicating the issue. Therefore, a role must be played in the American-created battleground. As I have already said, America has mastered the art of politics. It got approval before consulting with the Palestinian people. It got it from Europe and obtained it from the Islamic and Arab countries and the Soviet Union, putting our backs to the wall. If we say no, we would be facing a tremendous challenge. I confess that, in our present situation, we are not up to this, and therefore, if we want to raise the slogan of internationalism now, we would have to forgive the loss of Palestine and hold our tongues until the giant awakens from his sleep. I do not claim this is within my reach or that it is possible and easy. I am saying ten or twenty years from now, during which America would have become more belligerent vis-a-vis the Islamic tendencies. Today, I heard a grave news report to the effect that America opposes the independence of the Islamic states in the Soviet Union; it is interested in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, save for the Islamic states. What does this mean? The true war is against Islam. The [American] judge's real war is against the Islamic tendencies in the world and against the Tehran axis.

[Dr. al-Zahhar] (interrupting) Tehran has nothing to do with it.

[Ubayd] This is my personal vision. Tehran is now trying to bring the Muslims together and to draw together the Islamic states in the Soviet Union, thereby creating a significant weight, a weight that used to be in America's favor but has not yet turned in the other direction. I hope that the Muslims will unite so that my aim and the aim of every honorable patriot may rise high.

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] One last question. If the PLO does not participate in the proposed conference, what would the attendant damage, expectations, and results be?

[Dr. Zuhni] If the conference fails, the core of the conflict will remain, and there will be a renewed call for unity. Our brothers in Hamas and the Salvation Front may find enough time to respond to the call.

[Prof. 'Abd-al-Latif] I believe that Palestinian participation in the conference is essential from the American viewpoint, because it represents the only bridge over which an Arab-Israeli conciliation can pass. America is very interested in realizing Arab-Israeli interests. Therefore, we have to go by this yardstick. As Dr. Abu-Yusuf said, the PLO can thwart the conference or can render it a success with one stance. Therefore, America is very much interested in bringing about an Arab-Israeli conciliation, and I imagine that it would be compelled to give the Palestinians some guarantees to satisfy them. The PLO must adhere to the constants, thereby forcing America to give some guarantees. America is also aware that the PLO can thwart this conference, which means that the Arabs and Israel would continue their hostility, and we would be the obstacle in this conference as well.

[Dr. al-Zahhar] I think there is a difference among the various Palestinian tendencies, with each basing its assessments on its own convictions and visions. God Almighty said: "To each is a goal to which God turns him; then strive together (as in a race) toward all that is good. Whosoever ye are, God will bring you together." [Koran 3:148]

Consequently, anyone who, in his opinion, sees advantage in going along with this conference, let him do so, but each side must judge the other calmly, carefully, and objectively. The exchange of opinions broadens the sphere of political vision, and I believe that we now need to keep our differences out of the sphere of struggle.

After Dr. al-Zahhar concluded his talk, he excused himself, but Prof. 'Ubayd asked him to wait for a few moments to hear what he had to say:

"If the Islamic Resistance Movement joins the PLO, it will definitely reinforce this position. And, should it confine itself to its position, this will also be a strong buttress in the region, even if it finds the existing political course unacceptable. Your presence in the arena is a source of strength, even if you do not join the PLO. However, if the Islamic tendency were to join, more strides would be made and the Palestinian public would rally together, thus allowing us to experience at least some aspects of Islamic internationalism. But since they hold this view, we will avail ourselves of your help."

[Hamid] (directing his words to al-Zahhar) Differences are a healthy phenomenon. We would be delighted if the brothers in Hamas were to join the PNC. However, this is their personal affair, and it would be lovely to keep the doors of dialogue open.

[Ubayd] while discussions are fruitful, constructive, and reasonable, we have to respect the different viewpoints, and our respect for our viewpoints keeps us far away from strife.

[AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI] A quick cable to the PNC....

[Dr. al-Zahhar] I would just like to send the best words our God Almighty said: "God is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depth of darkness he will lead them forth into light." [Koran 2:257] So, if we want to go out of the darkness into the light, we have to go back to God Almighty. I believe that these words resonate in Shaykh al-Sa'ih's bosom. I ask God Almighty to help him change this course that is incompatible with Islam, be it to a large or small extent.

[Abu-'Ala'] I wish them all success and unity, and hope that they will not take any steps before long and careful study.

[Dr. al-Zuhni] I say to them: 'I hope that we will see young faces with young blood. Do not join the conference without Palestinian guarantees. Do not join the conference without all the factions, including Hamas.'

[Abu-Suhayl] I hope that the PNC members will rise above personal and national differences, and hope that they will give the matter the careful consideration it so richly deserves, and that they will bring in all the various factions operating in the field of struggle in the occupied territories, including the brothers in Hamas and other movements. This is because it is a very serious situation, and we need the efforts of all the loyal brothers on the political scene. I would like to underscore an important matter, namely the relationship between the occupied territories and the outside, a relationship that must be given great importance. Moreover, the brothers in the occupied territories must be given the right to include their opinions on the agenda. I hope that the PNC members will truly represent all segments of the Palestinian people in all walks of life. Accordingly, the people in the occupied territories must be consulted since they are the ones who are suffering the ordeal and who will bear the consequences of any political mistakes, and therefore, they have the right to have their opinion heard at the highest levels.

Finally, many thanks to AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI's management and staff for this exquisite endeavor, and we thank brothers Rashad al-Madani and Abu-Zayd for this great activity.

[Abd-al-Fattah] We thank the editorial staff of AL-BAYADIR AL-SIYASI for this pioneering role in holding such a public symposium to expound the Palestinian public opinion, and I hope this will not be confined to the political aspect, but will include societal and educational issues and matters important to the Palestinians. We thank brothers Rashad and Hani for this great effort.

[Zuhni] These symposiums help to break a great deal of ice, to bring together points of view, and to bring together constructive and objective ideas representing trends and thoughts.

We thank AL-BAYADIR's management and editors, and brothers Hani and Rashad for this effort.

When the symposium was over, we thanked the guests for responding to the invitation to take part in it, in the hope that this corner of the people's magazine will be a fruitful and constructive step on the road of continued contributions. There will be another encounter, God willing.

[Boxed item] Dr. Mahmud Khalid al-Zahhar (Abu-Khalid) was born in Gaza in 1945. He graduated from the 'Ayn Shams University School of Medicine in 1971 and worked at government hospitals from 1972 to 1982, when the authorities fired him because of the al-'Aqsa [Mosque] incidents. From 1981 to 1985, he served as president of the Medical Association in Gaza and has been a member of the management staff ever since the association was established. He was a member of the board of higher education for two and a half years and, from 1985 to the present time, he has occupied the position of chief of the medical department of the Islamic University in Gaza. He has conducted many research studies and taken part in many symposiums inside and outside the occupied territories. He has been arrested several times, and is married and has seven children.]

[Boxed item] Mr. 'Abd-al-Latif 'Ubayd (Abu-Suhayl) was born in Majdal in 1934. He graduated from Cairo University in 1962, where he majored in sociology. He worked in the teaching profession and is still working as a teacher with the UNRWA in Gaza. He has been arrested several times by Israeli authorities and has taken part in some local symposiums on political, educational, and social matters. He has vast experience in reform and in conflict- and problem-resolution. He is secretary of the board of trustees of the College of Science and Technology.]

EGYPT

Newspaper Welcomes Public-Sector Business Law 92AF0115C Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 20 Sep 91 p 6

[Commentary by Sami Mutawalli: "Business Sector Law, Sound Implementation"]

[Text] It will go down in the annals of history that the present People's Assembly has issued the most serious law in the history of Egyptian parliamentary life, namely the business sector law, which affects Egyptian society's economic foundations. It is a prominent landmark in the serious endeavor to realize aspirations we have often talked about and slogans we have often raised: calling for increasing productivity, developing the public sector, and liberating the Egyptian economy.

The public sector is not an innovation in Egypt, for it means state ownership. All world countries, even the mightiest in the capitalist system, have public ownership

and private ownership. Governments have public ownership and private ownership. The struggle, or competition, revolves around the ability of the public sector or the private sector to play its economic role in the national economy. If management of the national economy as a whole is successful, it will affect the economy as a whole, and if its management is shaky, it will have a negative effect on the Egyptian economy. Many attempts have been made in the past to approach this goal, but these were not serious attempts. They were attempts of form rather than content. As a result, we got entangled in the web of varying definitions, while disease continued to spread in the public sector's body until some of its sections became almost paralyzed.

Thank God, Dr. 'Atif Sidqi's government was recently able to approach this minefield of a subject. It has submitted to the People's Assembly the draft law that has come as a response to the demands by the people's deputies in the parliament, both majority and opposition, to liberate the public sector from whatever is hindering its progress. The law has realized what the people's deputies have been demanding for years: the need to separate ownership from management so that the state's role as the sector owner is confined to maintaining accountability for all results. At the same time, management should exercise its activity in the sector in the same manner and method by which successful private investments are managed. It is to be free from government control. The law adopts the principle of reward and punishment for hard workers and producers, and assures the earned rights of the sector's workers and employees in full. Indeed, it provides clear opportunities for further gains if greater production is achieved. The law gives management a free hand and limits the multiplicity of the controlling bodies, which has sometimes hindered work.

There is no doubt that the public sector cannot play a pioneering role, nor can it lead the development process. It cannot be, as the constitution rightly states, the bulwark of the national economy, unless this sector is strong and is not suffering from the various diseases that have afflicted it in past years. It suffices to know, as Minister of the Cabinet Affairs and Administration Development Dr. 'Atif 'Ubayd said in Parliament, that the number of public sector companies to which the new law will apply are 324 out of 372. The total book value of the public sector companies properties is 75 billion Egyptian pounds. Some of the public investments are not included in these figures. The government owns 30 billion pounds in shareholdings and accumulated reserves. The public sector debt totals 45 billion pounds—more than the ownership—and 60 percent of the funds invested in the public sector are owned by creditors.

The readjustment of financing structures means reducing this debt, i.e., to reduce the figure from 45 billion pounds to 30 billion pounds. If we are to balance our accounts, we must repay the debts. Repaying the debt should be either through increasing capital or through profits. These are the two principal resources for

repaying debts. Increasing the capital cannot be achieved through the state general budget in view of the current deficit, which we constantly demand be reduced.

We now come to profits. Net profit realized by the state budget was 30 billion pounds on 30 June 1990, for a total of 1.017 billion pounds [as published]. So can we readjust the various financing structures, bearing a 45 billion-pound debt, with one billion pounds from treasury net profits from 30 billion pounds, i.e., at the rate of 3 percent? Where can we get profits that could achieve this balance?

Let's come to a third fact, namely that private funds placed in banks as deposits in 1985 totaled 42 billion pounds, which went up to 60 billion pounds by 30 June 1990, which means that money is available to individuals but not to the state. Therefore, the way to adjusting the imbalance in the financing structures is to allow Egyptian citizens who have such contributions [remainder of sentence missing]. This is not an innovation in the 372 public sector companies; since 1961, the private sector was participating in 33 companies by providing private funds alongside funds from the public sector companies.

Having had a successful experiment, having funds available, and having a financing structure that is deficient, wouldn't it be laxity on our part not to lay down a law that would permit using the accumulating Egyptian funds to rectify a deficiency, something which we have been calling for since 1965 and has not yet been achieved?

Now that we have actually begun implementing the law that has come 26 years late, and having gone past the stage of slogans, we want to see a business sector of a different character, enjoying greater freedom, and under better management.

Crucial Points in New Banking Law

92AF0015E Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 27 Sep 91 p 7

[Editorial by Usamah Saraya: "Major Changes in Egyptian Economy"]

[Text] The major changes taking place in the Egyptian economy following its deregulation have caused what can be described as a revolution in the Egyptian banking system, particularly with regard to the effects of freeing up the interest rate and the tendency toward a total standardization and deregulation of the Egyptian pound rate, the final stage of which comes into effect next month. Also, allowing the establishment of currency exchange offices is a significant change. We have seen Egyptian banks departing from their customary positions and engaging in competition by setting up several savings funds. Indeed, there is an ongoing race in this direction. If we look at developments in the internal banking system, we find that we must make substantial changes in bank laws that have remained unchanged over the past 16 years. We also find that international

changes are developing quickly, which confirms the importance of this objective. The banks will play an important role as financial institutions in the new world economic order. It is essential that Egyptian banks, in terms of efficiency and financial adaptability, should be competitive. Therefore, it is essential to increase the present banks' capital, especially after the amount of savings in them has increased to 70 billion Egyptian pounds and \$13 billion. Additionally, world changes make it obligatory for us to develop a deposit insurance system and to ensure the cooperation of the Egyptian banking system, particularly following the regrettable events involving the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

All these circumstances and changes were the natural prelude to looking into introducing a new law, or making changes in the current law on banks and deposits.

Dr. Hamid al-Sayih suggests that changes are necessary for Egyptian banks and calls for revising some of the banking law regulations in order to be compatible with both local and international situations. Dr. Hazim al-Biblawi, chairman of the Egyptian Bank for Export Development, calls for the need to effectively strengthen the Central Bank in order to become a system capable of changing from a system issuing orders to one laying down and formulating policies, stressing the importance of control and regulations, since there can be no freedom without strict controls and regulations.

This is how the experts envision the ideal form of the law on banking and deposits.

Dr. Hazim al-Biblawi says that an analysis of the new amendments in the law on banking and deposits shows that it covered three basic points:

[First], the changes involve new provisions in order to be in accord with the new economic policy, including the present law that stipulates that the bank is the party that fixes the interest rate, while under the new law the interest rate is deregulated, and there is no difference between the government and the public sector.

As for the second point, it is to give more powers to the Central Bank so that it will play its role. Under the law, the Central Bank fixes the banks' capital by laying down regulations for the auditors. It has also become the Central Bank's right to approve senior staff appointments in banks, which means greater Central Bank control on banks.

As for the third point, it becomes evident in the weakening of the Ministry of Economy's role, since all the Ministry's jurisdictions in the present law have been transferred to the Central Bank or the prime minister.

Dr. al-Biblawi believes it is necessary to strengthen the Central Bank's control over banks, since an atmosphere of freedom does not mean allowing chaos; freedom without control and regulations destroys things, but the difficulty is in the method and type of controls. These

should be different, both in form and content, from the system of intervention with orders; control should not be through interference in executive operations, but Central Bank control through general rules and by laying down controls and regulations so that they are bound to achieve the desired general objective. Therefore, we must realize that control under a free system is extremely difficult, since interference with crude orders is easy, but shifting from the system of orders to that of rules requires a great amount of imagination.

Dr. al-Biblawi said: "Therefore, I have certain observations regarding the proposed amendments to the banking and credit laws, most important of which are:

"Central Bank intervention to ensure the proper auditing of accounts and the banks' financial situation is a basic and sound idea; it is guaranteed by the choice of auditors and the method of such choice, of which the Central Bank should be informed. If the Bank does not approve, it should communicate its objection within 30 days. This means that the Central Bank is stealing the shareholders' rights. This would also lead to postponing the general assembly meeting for months, until the Central Bank approves. A better idea is for the Central Bank to choose a list of auditors who are distinguished by their efficiency and accuracy, and to leave the banks and the general assemblies to choose from these auditors. Thereby, we shift from the system of orders to that of general rules, thus enabling the Central Bank to achieve what it wants without giving orders or stealing other people's rights.

"Also, electing members of boards of directors and general managers in the proposed manner would turn the Central Bank into a bottleneck or a center of power, while giving the Central Bank the right to reject any person would provide the required guarantees without the bank becoming a center of pressure or a hub for interceding in favor of those seeking promotion or appointment.

"Also, the question of putting fines imposed on banks in a special account is wrong, and would open the door for trouble and conflict of interest. If our aim is to streamline the budget, one of the basic principles is the integrity of the treasury; in other words, to do away with the idea of special funds and to direct all revenues in the funds to the state budget, from which all utilizations emerge. Thus, when fines are imposed, they should be in the public interest and not for a special fund or a particular use; fines in which employees and staff might have an interest in imposing, even though the bank may be found to have committed an error that was in the public interest and which should therefore be forgiven or cancelled."

Dr. al-Biblawi: "The proposed changes also raise a number of questions, most important of which are:

"General assemblies of public sector banks are headed by the governor of the Central Bank instead of the minister of economy. Chairmen of public banks are

appointed by the governor and not by the minister of economy. Since the Central Bank is the party that makes the appointments, how can it control the appointees? In other words, how can I appoint a person and then tell him that he is incapable? Therefore, the Central Bank must refrain from involving itself in the question of selecting individuals; it should limit itself to maintaining control over them. Also, the significance of the governor of the Central Bank chairing public banks' general assemblies is that, by right, it becomes owner of these banks, which represent 80 percent of all banking activity, while the Central Bank and its governor are for all banks—public, private, and joint. The governor's involvement in personnel selection and chairing banks' general assemblies is inconsistent with the idea of control and regulations; it is a shift to the idea of ownership. We want the Central Bank to be the trustee of credits policy and to ensure adherence to it by all the banks.

"The Central Bank should shun sensitivities by avoiding involvement in executive decisions and in staff selection, so that it will have the full right to object freely and without embarrassment, because it is simultaneously the selector and the controller, just as powers of a central bank should be in the banking system sector, with no discrimination between the public and private sectors.

"A final remark is that the amendments stipulate that if any bank is in difficulty and faltering, the Central Bank may increase its capital. If the shareholders do not respond, then the bank can be liquidated or merged with another bank. This is illogical, because the Central Bank's right to protect the depositors is based on the premise of not causing harm to others. You cannot force a merger on others, but you can say that if the bank does not respond then it should cease operation."

"What we should emphasize," he said, "is that we should shift our thinking from the era of orders to that of regulations. This is extremely important and gives the Central Bank real strength and assurance to play its role effectively, to regulate the credit policy, to control banks, and to achieve objectives without [words missing]."

Dr. Hamid al-Sayih, former minister of economy and president of Hong Kong Bank says:

"I believe it is necessary to develop the bank laws because it has been 16 years since law Number 120 of 1975 was issued. During this time, all local and international conditions have changed and so the current law has become insufficient to cope with these developments. We must realize that since 1975 and 1976, there have been tremendous developments in the Egyptian banking system. There are now 100 banks, while before, banking was restricted to public sector banks, some specialized banks, and a limited number of investment banks. Hence, we find that the banking structure has changed completely, and there has been a tremendous development in banking activities in Egypt. Several factors have contributed to this change. Deposits have increased to 70 billion pounds and \$13 billion. The

private sector's activity has increased, and there is a dire need to follow up on economic activities. Credits have increased substantially. All these developments should be accompanied by change in the banking law. In the midst of all this jumble, investment companies appeared. They pay high interest, while Bank Law Number 120, which gives the Central Bank the power to fix the interest rate, has brought about a change in the civil law, which limits the interest rate to only 7 percent, which is not to be exceeded.

"The interest rate was deregulated. Then the alarm sounded following the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. This was a worldwide event that sounded the alarm for all the banking officials in England the United States to tighten control on banks worldwide and to protect customers' deposits. We in Egypt realized that there is need for an insurance system to protect customers' deposits. Add to this all the worldwide financial and banking developments to strengthen the banks' financial standings and new levels of financial solvency." In view of all the above, Dr. Hamid al-Sayih believes that it was necessary to amend the banking law.

With regard to discussing the proposed law amendments, Dr. Sayih believes that the proposed law includes many positive changes. He has made the following remarks regarding the new amendments:

"It is necessary to amend the provision which gives the Central Bank the power to sell faltering banks or merge them with other banks, because it is not the Bank's prerogative, the Bank being the authority for registering banks and therefore having the right to liquidate a bank that does not comply. The proposed law also includes a provision for the establishment of a fund to insure deposits having an independent corporate status, a system which is adopted in all parts of the world, and to establish a center for training bank managers capable of shouldering the ever-changing nature of banking operations.

"Increasing bank capital is an important process to deal with the new reforms following the great increase in deposits. Thus it is inconceivable that there should be a public sector bank with 15 billion pounds in deposits that has only 45 million pounds capital. This situation would be inappropriate and inconsistent.

"The time given to banks to improve their situation and capital is five years, which is appropriate and quite adequate. Moreover, the proposed law includes provisions allowing the establishment of new banks, because existing banks are either public sector banks or banks that have been established under the investment law, which precludes the establishment of new banks. Under the new law, the field would be open [for new banks], which is something natural. It should be noted, however, that the proposed law restricts the right of bank ownership to Egyptians. But as long as the idea is to look for a strong financial market, why shouldn't foreigners be given the opportunity?"

IRAQ

SAIRI Examines Domestic 'Lawlessness'

NC2310153991 (*Clandestine*) *Voice of Rebellious Iraq* in Arabic 1420 GMT 23 Oct 91

[Text] To serve the cause of our proud people, the Central Consultative Committee of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq [SAIRI] held a regular session last Wednesday under the chairmanship of SAIRI leader Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim. The committee reviewed recent regional and international developments as well as the results of the recent Saddamist onslaught against the innocent population of the marshlands.

The committee discussed the following topics:

First, the committee discussed the internal situation in Iraq and the widespread lawlessness in the country.

Second, the committee looked into the situation in the marshlands and the recent treacherous campaign against the population of the marshlands in [al-Tuhaym], [al-Karamliyah], al-Mazlaq, and other areas, which involved barbaric artillery shelling and airplanes strafing the area's peaceful inhabitants.

Third, the committee reviewed the outcome of the efforts by the Iraqi opposition groups in the international arena.

Kurdish Paper To Publish Daily 'Next Week'

JN2310171291 *Baghdad AL-JUMHURIYAH* in Arabic 22 Oct 91 p 8

[Text] As of next week, the Kurdish newspaper HAWKARI [name as published] will be published daily to continue its cultural and informational message among the Kurdish citizens of Iraq. It will be the first political daily in the history of Kurdish papers.

HAWKARI will be published by the Kurdish Culture and Publishing House. Its editor in chief will be Dr. Badrkhan al-Sindi and its deputy editor in chief is 'Abdallah 'Abbas. It will be printed at the al-Jamahir Press House.

KUWAIT

Electricity, Water Minister on Repair of War Damages

LD1810202591 *London KUNA* in Arabic 1145 GMT 15 Oct 91

[Article by Walid 'Abdu 'Abbas]

[Text] Kuwait, KUNA—The Kuwaiti minister of electricity and water, Ahmad Muhammad al-'Adasani, said that 95 percent of the electricity network in Kuwait has become operational since liberation. In an interview

with KUNA, he stressed that electricity is available to cover consumption, as there are 4,100 megawatts now available, while consumption fluctuates between 1,600 and 1,900 megawatts, depending on the temperature.

He noted that distilled water production has currently reached 128 million gallons per day, while consumption totals about 95 million gallons per day. Production will increase as consumption increases; however, he expected that consumption would decrease in the near future.

Minister al-'Adasani denied the presence of any oil pollution in subterranean waters. He explained that after the sites were tested, it was found that the oil lakes beneath the surface did not exceed a depth of one-half meter, while subterranean waters are 200 feet deep. He alluded to a scientific study being conducted by the Ministry of Electricity and Water in cooperation with the Kuwaiti Institute for Scientific Research to determine the depth of the oil lakes beneath the surface.

The minister of electricity and water said that since the liberation of Kuwait, his ministry has succeeded in connecting 16,000 cables and that 268 of the 300 stations have resumed operations. He said that this week water began to be pumped from the al-Sulaybiyah and al-Shaqaya wells to some parts of Kuwait, while noting the difficulty in reaching subterranean water wells because of the mines planted around them.

He pointed out that the 1,540-million-gallon reserve of potable water was strategically created for use in emergencies, as happened during the days of liberation because of the destruction of distillation stations and the interruption of electricity. Minister al-'Adasani affirmed that the water used during the occupation was completely suitable for all purposes, pointing out that workers of the ministry regularly checked the water during that time.

New Central Bank Governor Appointed

LD0310051291 London KUNA in Arabic 1517 GMT
1 Oct 91

[Text] Kuwait, KUNA—Radio Kuwait said today that a decree has been issued appointing Shaykh Salim 'Abd-al-'Aziz Sa'ud al-Sabah as governor for the Central Bank of Kuwait, with the rank of "minister," for a five-year period.

Bank Governor Reports Progress in Resuming Oil Exports

LD2010222291 London KUNA in Arabic 0915 GMT
17 Oct 91

[Excerpts] 17 Oct, KUNA—Shaykh Salim 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Central Bank governor, said that the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait has left huge damages and losses in the infrastructure and local assets exceeding tens of billions of dollars, in addition to the damages inflicted on the infrastructure of the oil sector. In his address to the council of governors of the IMF and

World Bank here, he emphasized that despite these damages and losses, Kuwait has resumed its oil exports and is producing 260,000 barrels of oil per day, that the production will be 400,000 barrels per day by the end of this year, and that it is hoped that it will reach 800,000 barrels per day in June 1992. [passage omitted]

The Kuwaiti Central Bank governor reviewed the international economic crises which stemmed from the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. He referred to the international efforts to help the countries harmed by it and to the fact that Kuwait has allocated \$5 billion as aid to seven countries which were directly affected by the crisis. He also pointed out that Kuwait has agreed to the establishment of a holding company with \$500 million in capital in Egypt and another one in Syria with \$200 million in capital for various investment purposes. He said that in addition to the direct government aid, the Kuwaiti Arab Economic Development Fund continued its easy-term aid programs even during the invasion and under occupation. The fund has given 11 loans and four grants for technical aid whose value totalled \$405 million. He added that within the context of the amir's initiative aimed at easing the debts burden on the developing countries, the fund has cancelled interest on loans whose value totalled \$42 million, which benefitted seven Arab countries, 24 African countries, and 12 Asian countries. He said that the total of the loans and grants given by the fund since its establishment is approximately \$6 billion and that 65 developing countries have benefitted from them. He pointed out that Kuwait has contributed \$100 million to the resources of the African Development Fund, \$20 million to the special aid program for the African countries, and has supported the increase in capital of the World Bank and the international finance institution. [passage omitted]

Chamber of Commerce Director Selected

LD1010142591 London KUNA in Arabic 1106 GMT
10 Oct 91

[Text] Kuwait, KUNA—The board of directors of the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce and Industry has unanimously chosen Mr. Hilal Mishari Hilal al-Mutayri as director general of the chamber.

Mr Hilal al-Mutayri had resigned from membership in the board of directors in accordance with the chamber's law, which prohibits the director general from simultaneously holding any other post beside that of director general.

A statement issued by the chamber mentions that Mr Hilal al-Mutayri began his new post on 1 October, and that he has previously occupied several posts in the fields of economics and investments, the latest of which was the post of director general of the Kuwaiti Investment Company.

LEBANON

Shi'ite Leaders on Libyan Role in Imam's Disappearance

Overview of Disappearance

92AE0006A *Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic*
2 Sep 91 pp 14-17

[Article by Hasan Sabra: "What If Libya Had Shown Enough Interest From Beginning"]

[Text] What would have happened had Libya shown enough interest as of the first day of the disappearance of Sayyid Musa al-Sadr, the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council chairman, who was Libya's guest at the time on an official invitation from Colonel Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi himself to take part in Libya's 1978 celebration of the 1 September Revolution anniversary?

Thus, we are faced with several issues:

- Imam al-Sadr's disappearance on 31 August 1978;
- Libyan interest, or lack thereof, and its consequences;
- Libyan-Shiite relations prior to and after disappearance.

Beginning

Since then, Libya's relations with the Shi'ite Council and the Movement of the Dispossessed has not been as positive as the Council's and Movement's relations with Syria, or even Algeria, even though they have not been as negative as their relations with Iraq, for example.

Libya was greatly influenced by its Lebanese leftist allies' theories on, and assessment of, al-Sadr, his role, and his institutions, foremost of which are the Shi'ite Council, the Movement of the Dispossessed, and the Amal Movement itself.

In wake of the 1958 rebellion and Fu'ad Shihab's assumption of power, the Lebanese left viewed Musa al-Sadr as somebody who had come to block its rise, which had been accelerating after the 1967 setback and after the Palestinian resistance's historic arrival and rise in Lebanon and in the Arab homeland following the setback, especially in wake of the al-Karamah battle in Jordan on 21 March 1968.

The proliferation of the resistance, especially in Jabal 'Amil on the Palestinian border—the stronghold where al-Sadr rose and from where his influence spread—was a bone of contention between al-Sadr and the various factions of the Lebanese left, who saw that its fertile soil was the soil of Jabal 'Amil, of its people, and of their ebullient feelings of Arabism, progressivism, social justice, and change. Because al-Sadr was the author of a call which advocated preserving Lebanon's entity because it is the Lebanese people's final homeland and which, at the same time, preached preserving the resistance, he

had to clash with those who called for supporting the resistance, even at the expense of Lebanon's entity, i.e., the leftists.

This clash is an indication of a major difference in program, thinking, and method. The Arab political disagreement method, i.e., the method of unethical disagreement, was used to reflect this difference. In the eyes of the leftists, Musa al-Sadr was dispatched by the shah of Iran to rally the Shi'ites behind the Islamic alliance that was supported by the United States, according to the leftist characterization. Thus, al-Sadr had to be fought and contained.

Disagreement between the left and Musa al-Sadr escalated as a result of two prominent positions taken by Imam al-Sadr:

First, he opened up to all the political, social, cultural, and religious forces in north, south, west, and east Lebanon, and in Jabal Lubnan.

The man called for dialogue and debate and succeeded in arousing the admiration of everybody he met and everybody who read his works or attended one of his symposiums or lectures in Kisrwan, 'Akkar, al-Biqā', or Beirut, not to mention the south, of course.

At a time when the impact of the call for isolating the Phalangists and other rightist forces in Lebanon was growing among the Lebanese leftists, Imam Musa al-Sadr believed that dialogue had to be held while condemning any obstruction of development and progress in Lebanon.

Second, the start of the second war, in which the left found its golden opportunity to rise—and it did, temporarily. This was the fertile soil for the left to proliferate with the rifle, to wrench political recognition of its presence, and to destroy, of course, the government's political, social, cultural, and military structures in a manner that was incompatible with al-Sadr's call and with his ideas, which advocated preserving the entity and developing the system. What is more important, al-Sadr rejected the war and refused to take part in it or to form an armed movement for the purpose until Amal was formed. Everybody remembers the sit-in al-Sadr staged in al-'Amiliyah to protest the outbreak of sectarian violence in al-Biqā' in 1975 (but this, too, is another issue). Perhaps the 1976 incidents in al-Nab'ah, the Shi'ite stronghold in Christian east Beirut, which contained no less than 200,000 Shi'ites evicted from the south and al-Biqā', were the flash point in the disagreement between al-Sadr and the left, along with the Palestinian resistance, which supported the left militarily and supplied it with men and weapons. Libya backed the left, of course, with money, weapons, supplies, and a supporting political and propaganda position.

The imam rejected continued fighting in this area and called for a dialogue to neutralize it, whereas the left

decided that the area had to be the base for ceaseless fighting to split the Christian east in the heart of the capital.

Amin al-Jumayyil, chairman of the al-Matn al-Shamali Phalangist district, in whose jurisdiction al-Nab'ah was located, was the military commander who was determined to evict the Shi'ites and to "purge" the area.

Amin al-Jumayyil succeeded in evicting the Shi'ites from al-Nab'ah and the left held al-Sadr accountable. Consequently, he was compelled to reside in Damascus for a long time so that he would not provide the opportunity for another clash within the Islamic-leftist ranks.

The first round of the two-year war ended and the contact lines were entrenched. The Arab Syrian Army entered and the various areas were then opened to each other. But the inhabitants of al-Nab'ah have not returned, and neither have the inhabitants of al-Damur (to date).

A political battle of a different kind then started in the Islamic areas between the left, supported by the resistance and Libya; and al-Sadr, supported by other forces, such as the Ba'th Party organization, the Union of the Working People's Forces, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party [SSNP]—(Qunayzih's wing at the time)—and the Kurdish Liberation Party [PRK]. Thus, two national political action fronts emerged in west Beirut and the Islamic areas:

1. a leftist front led by Kamal Junblatt, and then Walid Junblatt, including the communists, the socialists, the SSNP wing allied with Libya, the resistance, and the Nasirites with their various tendencies;
2. a nationalist front including the Ba'th, the Amal Movement that emerged during the war, the Union of the Working People's Forces, the SSNP wing allied with Syria, and the PRK.

At a time when the role of the leftist front retreated in favor of the nationalist front, al-Sadr's position in the south and in the other Islamic areas was not at its best. Leftist propaganda succeeded in blaming him for the fall of and eviction of al-Nab'ah. At the same time, Libya was influenced by this propaganda and it had no initiatives for meeting with al-Sadr. Moreover, it was not in the interest of more than one Arab circle for such a relationship to be established, keeping in mind that prior to al-Sadr's disappearance, Libya purchased south Lebanon's tobacco crop even though it did not need it and even though it did not have profound relations with al-Sadr. Libya did so to bolster the southerners' steadfastness in their lands. Libya also took part in purchasing more than one olive crop and olive seedlings at incentive prices. Moreover, it opened its universities, institutes, and territories for the Lebanese, especially Shi'ite Lebanese, to work there.

So, the relationship was normal, or less than normal, until the visit took place. Why?

The beginning was in Algeria. At a meeting between al-Sadr and the late President Houari Boumediene, the Algerian president suggested that al-Sadr launch party activity open to the Arabs. As a start, he proposed that al-Sadr establish relations with Col. Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi. When al-Sadr told Boumediene that al-Qadhdhafi supported al-Sadr's opponents in Lebanon, Boumediene answered: 'You must meet him, present your ideas to him, and establish intellectual dialogues with him. The man is educated and he likes dialogue. He admires intellectual political leaders. Fundamentally, he presents himself as an intellectual and not as the head of a state.'

Boumediene then rang up al-Qadhdhafi immediately and suggested that he host al-Sadr. It was agreed to do so, provided that the visit be made on occasion of the 1 September Revolution anniversary, because Libya is eager to amass the broadest and most important Arab, Islamic, and international political, intellectual, and religious presence on this occasion.

In this course of events, is there anything to justify what developed later in Shi'ite-Libya relations?

Facts

Al-Sadr arrived in Libya, accompanied by Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qub and journalist 'Abbas Badr-al-Din. He was seen off [at Beirut Airport] by Mahmud Ibn Kurah, the [Libyan] charge d'affaires. An interesting thing about this invitation is that one hears from more than 20 Lebanese Shi'ite notables that they would have been on that trip if it hadn't been for some coincidence, such as jammed traffic, being busy going to the village, being busy with some unexpected work, forgetting, and so forth.

Al-Sadr and his two companions were not the only Lebanese on the trip. There were more than 50 Lebanese political, party, intellectual, journalistic, and artistic figures.

Al-Sadr and everybody else stayed at al-Shati' Hotel in Tripoli, which is always swarming with Libya's Arab and foreign guests throughout the year. Discipline in this hotel was nonexistent because it was handed over to a people's committee to manage it. This experiment was in its initial phase at the time and we don't know if things have improved now after more than a decade and a half from the start of this people's experiment.

One of the manifestations of lack of discipline and chaos is that one could leave the hotel and take the key with him without having his name deleted from the register. Often, one could be a guest or a resident at the hotel without having his name inserted in the hotel books.

It is very rare that one can contact a guest at the hotel by phone. The ordinary thing is that if somebody needs you, then he will come to you at the hotel directly because of the chaos. One rarely gets a message that somebody has called. This is something that has been well-known to

this hotel's guests and to Libya's visitors since the mid-1970s. These people make jokes about the interesting quirks of this hotel, especially when they are on the hotel's immense balconies that overlook the sea and that are overcrowded throughout the year.

Libya was very busy at the time with the revolution celebrations and with the large numbers of foreign delegations. Consequently, it was impossible for anybody to meet Col. al-Qadhdhafi before the conclusion of the celebrations.

Al-Sadr did not consider himself concerned with the anniversary, but believed that he had come on an official invitation for dialogue with the colonel and with the Libyan leaders in his capacity as an intellectual, the chairman of a religious council, and the political leader of a popular Lebanese movement.

On the other hand, this was not Libya's purpose, at least insofar as timing was concerned. So al-Sadr decided to leave.

This was before noon on 31 August 1978, i.e., one day before the start of the celebrations. He left because he did not wish to be a part of the celebration demonstration.

Al-Sadr and his two companions were seen off at al-Shati' Hotel gate by a number of Lebanese intellectual, political, and party figures who are known by name and who had spent several nights discussing with the imam intellectual, political, and cultural issues in which he was well-versed and on which he was an impressive speaker.

To here...and then blank.

On Tuesday, 3 September 1978, the Phalangist anti-Libya Voice of Lebanon Radio announced that contact had been lost with al-Sadr in Libya.

Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, the Higher Islamic Shi'ite Council deputy chairman, called the late Riyad Taha, an ex-chairman of the Journalists Union, to convey to him the news of loss of contact with al-Sadr and to ask him to discuss the matter with the officials at the Libyan Embassy and then with Tripoli itself, and to go there directly, if necessary, instead of creating a propaganda or political uproar.

Before Taha could reach any conclusion locally, and while he was preparing to go to Tripoli, the news was broadcast by the Phalangist Voice of Lebanon Radio. It was said at the time that there were people who sought to block Riyad Taha's trip and to push the issue to the level of political argument and slander.

At this point, the issue came to the public and the question about al-Sadr's whereabouts was raised. Libya was required to answer this question. But Ibn Kurah, the Libyan charge d'affaires here, was content to reiterate an answer given by an official of the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs—the External Liaison Bureau—to the effect that Hajj Amin al-Shahati, the external liaison

secretary at the time and a virtuous and respected man, saw Imam al-Sadr off at the airport.

No matter how big the snowball became, Libya never answered with anything more than that al-Sadr had departed.

The political scene, especially the Shi'ite political scene, began to boil over with the question, and Libya did no more than reiterate a statement to the effect that he had departed.

Shi'ite leaders made sincere endeavors to unveil the circumstances of the issue and Libya answered that the man had departed, not realizing how important the event was.

Libya's logic relied on the following mainstays:

- We invited the man and he was our guest. He arrived on 25 August and departed on 31 August.
- Had we concealed him, this would have been tantamount to political stupidity on our part, because we could have concealed him in Lebanon or anywhere else, not in Libya.
- If we had wanted to assassinate the man, we would have commissioned any friendly Lebanese or Palestinian organization to do so, also in Lebanon.
- There is no political disagreement whatsoever between us and the man. What is more important, we have no interest in concealing him. Look for those who have an interest in this disappearance.

Was Libya saying this in official or public statements, or in direct discussions with Shi'ite leaders? No. Why?

Here is where the failure and weakness of the Libyan answer lies.

Some people interpret it as proof of naive thinking and mishandling, some interpret it as proof of a negative position toward al-Sadr and his cause, and some get carried away and charge Libya with hostility for Shi'ism.

What made things worse is that Libya's Arab foes in Lebanon were more numerous and that they went too far in their incitement, and they had the necessary material for such incitement. Libya was uninterested and it told whoever contacted it: The man has left. Go and look for him in Italy.

In Italy, the Ministry of Interior officially denied that al-Sadr and his two companions had entered the country. The hostess of the Alitalia airliner which was said to have carried al-Sadr and his two companions denied that she had seen a man with the characteristics of al-Sadr who has more than one distinguishing mark, such as his towering height, and his black turban and black robe.

Moreover, Libya didn't send an envoy to clarify the issue when things were worsening, and it didn't offer to host a delegation to discuss the issue because in its view, the man had left.

Libya provoked whoever contacted it in this regard, be he a friend, an interlocutor, or an official.

The only answer it had was that the man had left.

But the Shi'ite leaders were not convinced. Emotions were flaring and there was nobody to cool them. Rather, there were lots of rumors and much incitement to ignite the emotions. So there had to be movement, and it was always in the direction of Damascus.

To Damascus

A Lebanese delegation comprising Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan, the Ja'fari Grand Mufti; Shaykh Ahmad al-Zayn, the Sidon religious law judge; and Shaykh 'Abd-al-Halim al-Zayn went to Damascus to explain the issue to the Steadfastness and Confrontation summit that was headed by President Hafiz al-Asad and attended by Presidents Houari Boumediene, Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi, 'Ali Nasir Muhammad, and Yasir 'Arafat. The objective was to meet al-Qadhafi and to hear a satisfactory explanation from him.

Prior to the meeting, President al-Asad sent somebody to advise the delegation members to be realistic and objective and not to provoke Col. al-Qadhafi, because the phase needed his role in confronting the treason Anwar al-Sadat had committed by going to the Zionist enemy in Jerusalem and holding the Camp David talks to conclude a peace treaty with Israel.

The delegation, headed by Shaykh Qabalan, met with Col. al-Qadhafi. The first question asked by the colonel was: Why did Shaykh Ahmad al-Zayn wear a turban different in shape from the one worn by Shaykh Qabalan? Qabalan explained to him that Shaykh Ahmad is from the Sunna sect and that it embraces the Turkish turban tradition, whereas the Shi'ite turban is conforms to the tradition known in the Arab Maghreb and Egypt, with some distinction.

Qabalan then steered the discussion toward the issue for which the delegation had come. Col. al-Qadhafi had one answer to offer throughout the session that lasted until late at night: al-Sadr departed, he departed.

The Islamic delegation left Damascus without a satisfactory answer. Meanwhile, the issue was creating interactions in Lebanon and the developments were creating interactions in the Shi'ite sect.

Iran rebelled and Imam Khomeyni's revolution triumphed.

Even though Libya supported this revolution from the first, the Libyan stance of support for Iran didn't intercede for Libya among the Shi'ites in Lebanon.

There were also those who ceaselessly poured oil on the fire. Moreover, Libya was never interested in refuting the accusation.

The Libyan role in Lebanon—a role which had peaked with Libya's active effort in fighting the Camp David accord—diminished. This decline began gradually, even though Libya's relations grew stronger with the leftist parties, especially with the communists, the SSNP, al-Murabitun, and with the Palestinian organizations, particularly the leftist organizations.

Libyan-Iranian relations developed further in wake of the fall of leaders of the Iran Liberation Movement, headed by Mehdi Bazergan, the disappearance of Ebrahim Yazdi, the assassination of Mostafa Chamran, the dismissal of Qutbzadeh (executed later), and of the rigged charge against Sadeq Tabataba'i in West Germany.

This faction was hostile to Libya and had firm relations with Musa al-Sadr. Moreover, informed sources believed that this faction considered Musa al-Sadr, with his enlightened religious ideas, charisma, Arab relations, and sweeping popularity among Lebanese Shi'ites, to be the person eligible to lead the movement's tendency inside Iran toward the actual authority.

The Iran Liberation Movement collapsed and Imam Khomeyni's tendency assumed power. The relations with Libya were strengthened and the relations between Iran and numerous influential Shi'ite leaders in Lebanon began to decline day after day.

Peak Followed Meeting

Israel invaded and the majority of the leftist parties' leaders fled, first from the south and then from Beirut, except for a few who stood fast and fought. The practical outcome was that Islamic forces tied ideologically to Iran and not in strong agreement with Imam Musa al-Sadr ascended. But these forces opted to move under the cover of al-Sadr's capacious robe first, and then to attract al-Sadr's ideological followers. When these forces gained strength, they moved under the name of Hizballah, which has been distinguished by heroic operations against the U.S., French, and Zionist forces.

The stronger Hizballah got, the more distinguished it became from the Amal Movement. It then disagreed with the Movement and embarked on such a bloody clash with it that the two sides proposed to eliminate each other. Hizballah and Iran continued to have good relations with Libya, whereas eternal estrangement had been entrenched with the other Shi'ite public, especially with Amal and the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council, which includes a select group of professional leaders and current and former official political leaders, in addition to the Ja'fari Grand Mufti and the (current) Council leadership.

Even Hizballah and all the others cooperating with Iran didn't declare their good relations with Libya out of their eagerness to keep their public, which is influenced against Libya because of its position on the al-Sadr issue. This is at a time when Libya was eager to demonstrate its

support for Hizballah and for its heroic operations against the Zionist enemy and the NATO forces.

This split in the Shi'ite position toward Libya has opened the door to the statement that Libya supports Hizballah just to spite Amal, and that Hizballah cooperates with Libya to reflect Libya's support for Iran in its war against Iraq and to reaffirm the distinction between its position and Amal's position toward Libya.

What Is Shi'ite Position Toward Libya Now?

It is impossible to imagine that this estrangement between the Shi'ite leaders and Libya can be ended without solving the issue of Imam al-Sadr's disappearance.

We must stress here that the Shi'ite leaders have become governed by this position vis-a-vis Libya because of the difference among these leaders' opinions on numerous issues in the domestic situation. They nearly disagree on a large number of issues but they are united in their position on Imam al-Sadr's issue due to ethical reasons that reflect themselves in the negative political stance toward Libya.

Moreover, these leaders' eagerness to show themselves to their public as being loyal to a humanitarian-political issue that rises to this level doesn't negate the fact that a large number of this public's members are turning to Libya for employment, studies, or commerce without changing their position on the al-Sadr issue and, simultaneously, without allowing this issue to become an obstacle in the face of their search for a livelihood, now that numerous doors have been shut in their faces in God's vast lands.

The surprising distinction here is that a large number of official Shi'ite leaders who are close to Syria visit Libya and meet with its leaders without any embarrassment and proclaim their support for Libya openly when it is subjected to any harassment or provocation without allowing this to influence the distinct political position they maintain.

Moreover, there is among the Shi'ites—especially among supporters of ex-Speaker Kamil al-As'ad, who is pained to see the al-Sadr issue unresolved and who denounces al-Sadr's disappearance without determining whether Libya is responsible or not—a tendency that still thinks that an issue like this one will continue to be an obstacle in the face of normalized relations with Libya.

Thus, even if the Shi'ite leaders—Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, Minister Nabih Birri, Speaker Husayn al-Husayni, and Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan specifically—remain alone in this context, the Shi'ite relations with Libya will not be set aright if an issue like this one is not resolved. Is it too late now? And what are the fruits of 20 years of Libyan effort at the various levels in this country? Will the Libyan leadership recall the phrase with which the masses received it, which was

flown on signs in all parts of Lebanon, saying: "Welcome to the beloved of [Jamal 'Abd-al-] Nasir, welcome to the beloved of Lebanon."

We believe that the issue needs a review. This review should have started as of the moment in which Col. Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi decided to cancel a scheduled visit to Lebanon in 1979 because it would not be safe, considering that signs were raised in the various parts of Beirut and the suburbs, in the south, and in al-Biqā' contrasting, as we recall, the signs that had been previously raised for the colonel.

Mysterious Al-Qadhafi Speech

92AE0006B Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic
2 Sep 91 pp 16-17

[Article: "Read This Incident"]

[Text] Amal Chairman Minister Nabih Birri recounts this incident which took place in 1984, saying:

"Mrs. Rabab al-Sadr contacted him from Tyre, which was still under the control of the Zionist occupation forces, to tell him that she had sent him a message with which she hoped he would familiarize himself and about which he would do whatever was necessary.

The message was delivered and it was nothing but a videotape concealed at the bottom of a tomato box shipped in a vegetable truck.

The video, which Birri was eager to view, was a speech by Col. Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi heaping praise on Nabih Birri, the noble Arab man, and at the same time criticizing Imam Musa al-Sadr strongly.

In the speech, al-Qadhafi said that the Amal Movement shifted from a position of hostility to the national forces, as it was during Imam Musa al-Sadr's control, to a position of Arab struggle under Nabih Birri's control.

After viewing the speech, Birri understood what Mrs. Rabab had alluded to. So the Amal Movement chairman summoned the members of the Movement's Political Bureau, then headed by Colonel 'Akif Haydar, and presented the matter to them, asking that a strongly-worded statement be issued against al-Qadhafi personally and calling for his physical liquidation.

The statement was issued, and it was truly severe. This was the Amal Movement's first stance against Libya since the 6 February uprising in Beirut. Everybody knows that during the uprising, Libya facilitated the passing of weapons and equipment from a nearby area in Jabal Lubnan to the combatants in Beirut through the PFLP-GC [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command], which was headed by Ahmad Jibril, who supervised the passing of weapons and equipment to the capital that had risen in rebellion against Amin al-Jumayyil's regime."

We say that this was the first strong position against Libya since the 1982 invasion, excluding the the ever-present occasion of 31 August, i.e., the anniversary of Imam al-Sadr's disappearance. On this occasion, Amal issues statements against Libya, organizes a mammoth annual rally, distributes pictures, and flies signs denouncing the colonel and Libya.

The surprising thing that must be noted here is that Col. al-Qadhdhafi delivered his speech in Libya only one week after the uprising. It was not carried by any Arab or international news agency, keeping in mind that these agencies had customarily circulated everything that could intensify the disagreement between Libya and the Shi'ites in Lebanon. Besides, the speech was not re-broadcast and the Lebanese press, especially the papers that are considered pro-Libyan, did not say a word about it. JANA [the Jamahiriyyah Arab News Agency] did not circulate it either. How did Mrs. Rabab al-Sadr get this speech?

It was recorded on a videotape in Libya and somebody delivered it to the concealed imam's sister who supervised—and she continues to supervise—major social institutions in Tyre prior to, during, and after the Zionist occupation, and who subsequently smuggled the tape out to Attorney Nabih Birri.

We conclude this incident with its outcome in another area. Col. al-Qadhdhafi summoned Lebanese and Palestinian leftist leaders to meet with him in Tripoli in wake of Amal's violent statement. The focus of his discussion with those leaders was the secret behind their silence on Amal's statement and how they could allege that they were Libya's friends while seeing Libya's foes call for liquidating the leader of Libya and of its revolution. The colonel and Major 'Abd-al-Salam Jallud used severe words against leftist Lebanese leaders who "sell al-Qadhdhafi honeyed words in his presence and then turn dumb and deaf when he is attacked, as if they do not hear what goes on around them."

Reinvestigation Sought

92AE0006C Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic
2 Sep 91 pp 18-19

[Interview with Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council Deputy Chairman, by Zayn Humud; place and date not given; "Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council Deputy Chairman: Solution Is in Having Libya Tell Truth of What Happened; Proof of Innocence Required of Libyan Regime; Accusation Is Not Confined to Libya But Libya Is Banner; Wager That Time Will Close Case Is Wrong Wager"]

[Text] 'Allamah Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council deputy chairman, has declared that the only solution to the issue of Imam Musa al-Sadr's disappearance is to have the Libyan

regime tell the truth of what happened. In an interview with AL-SHIRA', he has demanded that the case be reinvestigated.

[Humud] Now that 13 years have passed since Imam al-Sadr's disappearance, do you still feel that he is alive? Have there been any developments to convince you of whether the imam is still alive or dead?

[Shams-al-Din] To the question on whether one feels that Imam al-Sadr is still alive, the truth is that the length of time and the lapse of years leave their impact on the heart. But from a purely objective angle, and to a degree, from a subjective and emotional angle—and I have clung to this angle throughout the past three or four years in expressing my true feelings on this issue while maintaining strict accuracy and truthfulness—I say that I have not despaired. I cannot say that I hope, but I can say honestly and accurately that I have not despaired. Certainly, this phrase weakens year after year. But it can still be said honestly. There are no great hopes, certainly. But there isn't complete despair either. We have not reached the zero point regarding this question. As for the other question asking about our information, the truth is that we have absolutely no reliable information. You recall that two or more years ago exciting reports were spread by some sources. We investigated them and waited for some signs to confirm the allegation that was being made. But we got nothing, even though we investigated the matter extensively. As to the second question on whether there has been an exciting development between the time al-Sadr's disappearance was discovered and this time to convince us of what we were not convinced of previously regarding his being alive or dead and regarding guilt and innocence, the truth is that, as of the first months when the initial information was accumulated—information which peaked or which was fully developed in the Italian investigation—and since the Italian judiciary made their decision, there hasn't been any credible new development. Naturally, reports are circulated from time to time and from year to year. But we cannot call them information. They are just reports and stories like the ones we have already referred to. They soon recede or evaporate, or it is discovered that they do not rely on an objective and accurate basis. Nothing exciting has developed since the Italian judiciary decision and the details on which this decision was founded.

[Humud] There are two viewpoints. The first comes from the Shi'ite leaders who accuse Libya of concealing the imam and the second from Libya, which says that the imam left its territories and that it is innocent. How can these leaders be convinced that Libya is innocent?

[Shams-al-Din] First, we stress that the Libyan people are a fraternal Muslim people who are at the level of Arabism and Islam. Insofar as the Libyan people are concerned, this issue reflects no negative stance on their part. They are our brothers. As for the existing Libyan regime and its main symbols, we consider the Libyan regime responsible, but without being able to pinpoint

one person as the culprit in the judiciary sense, meaning that we cannot say that so-and-so is the culprit. This is something for the judiciary to determine. However, this ruling body that is in charge of affairs is the responsible party. We have no doubt about this. This conviction hasn't changed at all. As for the Libyan allegation that was made in the first week in which we started investigating the issue, it reflects the official Libyan position and there has been no change in it. This position doesn't at all surpass the bounds of an allegation, and it is not based on any convincing evidence. Conversely, the facts of which we are aware, and on which the Italian judiciary based their decision, confirm that this allegation is inaccurate. As for the Shi'ite [position], I do not wish to introduce a change into the "status quo." I believe that I said at the beginning of this interview that I do not like to have Imam al-Sadr's issue viewed as a Lebanese Shi'ite issue. Objectively, it is not. It is a Lebanese issue. The Lebanese and the Muslims have lost Imam al-Sadr. This is how the question poses itself now: How can we be convinced that Libya is innocent of the imam's concealment? As I have already said, the Libyan people have nothing to do with this situation. But the Libyan regime is required to offer proof and convincing evidence that it is innocent of the imam's disappearance. Very regretably, this has not been done to date and we have heard nothing other than the repeated allegation.

[Humud] Now, what is required of Libya?

[Shams-al-Din] Something simple, namely have the Libyan official and responsible authorities reveal and explain what happened and say what occurred. We can then look for an interpretation for what happened. Primarily, what happened must be stated and Libya must discard the repeated statement that the imam had departed Libya alive aboard such-and-such airliner on flight number so-and-so, because this allegation has not been proven to be true. Rather, it has been proven to be a forgery and a falsehood. I believe that the true inlet to reaching a conclusion on this issue and to making it possible to understand and interpret this issue is to have the Libyan regime tell what truly happened.

[Humud] Whatever the truth is?

[Shams-al-Din] Whatever it is. I say that after 14 years, this issue is still in the conscience of Imam al-Sadr's political and popular line, as everybody can see. This is a broad, deep, and far-reaching line, as people have seen throughout these years. This issue has not been settled and the wager that time will bury it is a mistaken wager. The issue remains alive in the conscience of this line. Therefore, the hopes that it will be forgotten and buried are phantom hopes that have no objective basis. The issue will remain alive. Therefore, what is required is for what happened, regardless of how offensive, repugnant, and painful, to be told. We can then embark on an argument or can agree on how to interpret it. But insistence on the story declared by Libya is useless. Regrettably, it is a story that has been proven not to be true. Everybody—the Libyan regime and people and the

Lebanese people—know that there were no bad relations between Libya and Imam al-Sadr's line and that there is no wish for hostility toward the Libyan regime. Rather, the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council and all aspects of this Lebanese political line have a spirit of openness to all the Arabs and Muslims.

[Humud] Why don't you demand a new investigation of the issue?

[Shams-al-Din] We are demanding that a new investigation be launched. Imam Musa al-Sadr's case is supposed to be a case which continues to be raised before the Lebanese judiciary and for which no sound answer has been found. The Libyan regime's allegation continues to be just that. This allegation has, as I have already noted, been refuted by the government that was its victim, namely Italy, through a declared and distributed judiciary decision. A new investigation must be launched to uncover the case. The issue is assumed to be raised before the Judiciary Council, which has not made a judiciary decision on it to date.

[Humud] Can the case be brought before the International Court of Justice, for example?

[Shams-al-Din] We demanded this at the time. I don't recall what we were told. Perhaps it was said that the court does not examine cases presented by private organizations, but only cases presented by governments. It seems that at the time, the Lebanese Government saw no reason to file a lawsuit. The fact is that we say that the party that can end this pending issue is the Libyan regime itself, either through the International Court of Justice, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic States, the Islamic Conference Organization, or through any international, Islamic, or Arab organizations. This regime can end it between Lebanon and Libya exclusively, or it can have it ended through Libya alone by telling what really happened. We are confident that throughout these years, the Libyan concerned agencies, such as the army and police intelligence agency, the politicians, and the political agencies, have been familiar with the details and intricacies of what has happened, with the current reality, and with whether Imam al-Sadr is still alive. These things can be told simply. We find that mammoth developments are occurring in the world. While we talk, an immense earthquake is taking place in the world's second superpower. A regime can say that such-and-such a thing happened after all these years. One then considers what is dictated and required by such a confession and announcement.

[Humud] Why is the accusation confined to Libya and is it in Libya's interest to have such a thing occur in its territories?

[Shams-al-Din] The accusation is not confined to Libya, but includes other parties. However, Libya is the banner in this issue because the concealment crime was perpetrated in the Libyan regime's territory, nothing more and nothing less, and because it was perpetrated by regular or irregular official forces or individuals. I don't wish to

presume anything. We are, in fact, bound to the limits of our view, which is supported by information and that is reflected in the Italian judiciary's decision. These people [who perpetrated the crime] are present in Libyan territory. It is in this connection that Libya is mentioned. If the Libyan regime had stated at the time what had taken place frankly, explicitly, and without concealment or crookedness, we suppose that the issue could have been perhaps ended and closed at that time.

[Humud] What if Libya declares today that the perpetrating party concealed the imam in its territories without its knowledge?

[Shams-al-Din] The announcement would then be examined. I cannot give an advance answer to an assumption. The announcement will be examined and all its aspects will be studied, and then the proper position will be taken on it. What is important is that there be a true and realistic statement and not just an ethereal allegation with no foundation.

[Humud] This question has a connection with the Lebanese Government and its position.

[Shams-al-Din] The present administration has not been tested on this issue. However, we in the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council have said frankly that the Lebanese Government and the Lebanese regime have not taken this issue as seriously as it should be taken. At the time, we demanded that relations with Libya be severed until the issue is clarified. But it seems that the situation is as you know it. The Lebanese reality is extremely diverse and the phase in which the crime was committed was an extremely complex phase that abounded with contradictions, even at the national level and at the level to which Imam al-Sadr belonged, namely the national, pan-Arab, and Islamic level. Influential political forces were tied to the Libyan regime by a profound and complex bond. The Lebanese regime was, on the one hand, incapable and, on the other hand, it watched for what it considered to be its interests. There might also have been failure. What we propose now is that matters must move in a different direction in the new Arab and Lebanese climate. This is something that the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council may raise in its next session, considering that it will take place during the concealment anniversary. The council will present some of these ideas, and they are ideas that give rise to questions that reflect my personal opinion. I have not consulted on them with any of my brothers in the Council bodies.

[Humud] What is the latest effort, contact, or endeavor you have made within the context of this issue?

[Shams-al-Din] Regarding general interest, such interest exists. But I cannot mention a specific effort or contact. However, it is agreed that when we meet with some Arab officials, we will raise the issue. But what is surprising is that throughout these long years, what we have been hearing or not hearing recently is what we had been hearing or not hearing initially. We are faced with pain, silence, and ambiguity.

No Evidence of Imam's Death

92AE0006D Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic
2 Sep 91 pp 20-21

[Interview with Nabih Birri, Amal chairman and Minister of State, by Hasan Sabra; place and date not given]

[Text] Nabih Birri, minister of state and Amal Movement chairman, has stressed that there isn't convincing evidence of Imam al-Sadr's death to date. He has demanded that Libya disclose the circumstances of the disappearance. In an interview with AL-SHIRA', Birri pledged that he would absolve Libya if the imam returns.

[Sabra] Now that 13 years have lapsed since Imam Musa al-Sadr's disappearance, do you still feel that he remains alive? Aside from feelings, is there specific information?

[Birri] The truth is that despite the lapse of the whole period from 1978 to this day on which we approach the anniversary of Imam al-Sadr's disappearance, there is absolutely no evidence of the martyrdom or death of Imam al-Sadr or of either of his two companions. Consequently, our conviction is that he is alive as long as there is no such evidence, especially since the Libyan regime has precedents in this regard. It jails people for long periods of time and then it becomes obvious that they are still alive.

[Sabra] Do you have names in this regard?

[Birri] An ambassador sent to Libya was incarcerated for a long time and people thought that he was dead. But he was then pardoned and released. The only way for Libya to persuade us that it is innocent of Imam al-Sadr's issue is to back down on the mistake and release him or disclose the truth and the reality.

[Sabra] This means that there is no information.

[Birri] No, there is no information. Of course, Mr. Hasan, we receive numerous reports to the effect that somebody saw the imam or that there is some sort of reference to the issue. There are even reports by some news agencies that speak of Libyan evidence. However, there is no evidence to date to convince me to say anything other than what I have said. The reasonable thing is to consider life, not death, as the basis as long as no body has been shown and no evidence of death has been provided. What we know is that the imam went to Libya to attend the 1 September Revolution anniversary and that we have seen nothing since then.

[Sabra] Since his disappearance and to this moment, has there been in the disappearance issue any development to persuade you of what you had not been convinced of previously?

[Birri] None, none.

[Sabra] And what about what you have just said about some people who offer video pictures and so on?

[Birri] With modern technological means, it is always possible for things to be manufactured. Reports can always be circulated. What is surprising is that for the past 13 years, whenever the anniversary of Imam al-Sadr's disappearance approaches, information and reports are leaked. It is as if certain intelligence activity is designated for this purpose. In the early years, I moved along this course, observed the matter more and more closely, attached to it more weight and credibility than it merited, and, at the same time, devoted efforts to it. I later discovered that these things could actually be some sort of leaks authored by Libyan intelligence.

[Sabra] We have a specific question, namely that your initial decision that al-Sadr is alive remains unchanged, and that for 14 years there has been just one accused party. Has there been any development to attach or to remove suspicion from any person or party?

[Birri] From the moment the Lebanese Government instructed the Lebanese ambassador in Libya at the time to investigate the issue, the same information received on the imam's disappearance and on the instances in which he was seen at the hotel on that morning while he was preparing to meet Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi has not changed. All the information has remained the same despite all the passing years. This is what motivates us to assert more and more strongly the responsibility of the Libyan regime, in the person of al-Qadhdhafi himself, for this act.

Their Argument Is Refuted

[Sabra] And there is no additional information on the issue?

[Birri] No, especially since the theatrical of the departure to Italy with which the Libyan regime wanted to rid itself of the imam's issue reaffirmed the reality about which I have talked more and more emphatically. When the image of a short person is drawn up to represent Imam al-Sadr and the image of a fat person to represent Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qub, and so forth, this confirms how feeble is the argument and how trivial is the attempt to evade the issue.

[Sabra] Two contradictory positions have surfaced from the outset. Shi'ite leaders assert that Libya is responsible for Imam al-Sadr's disappearance and Libya says that he left the country alive. What is it that makes the Shi'ites fully convinced that the Libya may be involved?

[Birri] Let us assume that there is an independent court and that there is in it a defendant and a prosecutor. The prosecutor is Lebanon, as it is supposed to be, and Libya is the defendant. It is certain that the imam received an official invitation, and this is inarguable. It is certain that all the Lebanese and foreign witnesses who were present on 31 August 1978, some of whom are still alive, saw the imam in the morning. He gave a lecture. There are numerous details of the sort and they are certain. Meanwhile, the defendant says that Imam Musa al-Sadr left the country. The most remarkable thing I have

mentioned to you is the image they pictured and drew up as one of the passengers on the airliner. The judiciary decision made by the Italian public prosecution affirmed that Imam Musa al-Sadr did not enter Italy. This means that he is present in Libya and that Libya is responsible for exposing this secret. If an individual kidnapped him in Libya as some people were kidnapped in Lebanon, then there are no more kidnapped people in Lebanon. As for the other kidnapped people, I am not responsible for them. Rather, I am exerting my good offices to end this issue. Meanwhile, there is a strong government and strong intelligence there. To date, they have not proven that the imam left the country. This means that their argument is refuted and that the imam is still in Libya.

[Sabra] If something of the sort did happen, i.e., if certain circles in Libya perpetrated the kidnapping without the government's knowledge, then what is required of Libya?

[Birri] Libya is required to disclose the truth and to expose the kidnapping party. To this moment, we don't know where the man is. This is unreasonable, especially since the imam was kidnapped during his meeting with Col. Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi. What does it mean when it is said people saw him leave the hotel on that morning and bade him farewell and that he climbed into a motorcade car and went to meet al-Qadhdhafi and then disappeared? Who would be responsible? If you have an appointment with me and if you are driven in my car, not yours—rather, if my car is sent to your home to pick you up, wouldn't I be responsible for you and wouldn't I know at least who kidnapped you, especially since the driver who drove you is still present?

[Sabra] Is there an opportunity now to demand a new investigation of Imam Musa al-Sadr's case?

[Birri] Sir, I would be disclosing no secret if I say that I have talked to President al-Asad and to more than one African president. I have talked to President Chadli Bendjedid and to foreigners, both Arab and non-Arab. One of the proposals I have made to the Algerian brothers is that as soon as a message is received from the Libyan leadership saying that the imam is still alive, I, Nabih Birri, am prepared to take the full responsibility, visit Tripoli, and declare that the imam had been kidnapped by a certain faction and that Libya has exerted all its weight to have the imam returned. We want no more than this. We want to eat grapes and don't want to fight the vineyard guard. I have used the same method [before]. As for the example that you cite to me, very regrettably, despite our pledge to declare that Libya is not responsible as soon as the imam returns or as soon as the message I have talked about is received, and even though all we want is an acknowledgment that the imam is still alive somewhere, despite all this, we have not received any answer.

[Sabra] If it so happens that the faction that is supposed to have kidnapped the imam releases him, then what would be required?

[Birri] They must clarify this issue and say why they have remained silent on it all this time. The Libyan regime has committed an extraordinary crime. Kidnapping in itself, not to mention detention, is an extraordinary crime. If they have done this, it will be left up to the people to pass their judgment. This is what we demand.

[Sabra] You have likened the situation between Lebanon and Libya to the case of a plaintiff and a defendant. What is Libya's interest now in perpetuating the imam's concealment? This leads us to another question, namely, if Libya has any interest in kidnapping the imam and getting rid of him? And why didn't Libya perpetrate this act in Lebanon, for example?

[Birri] This question is very logical. But you are measuring the irrational with the yardstick of the rational, which doesn't apply. Whether on the issue of Imam al-Sadr or on other issues before and after it, the Libyan regime's action has proven that it lacks the necessary rationalism and that it is founded on emotion. What comes to my mind here is the story of the Sudanese communists. It is also enough for one to count all the proclamations of unity declared by Libya with some Arab countries, totaling nine altogether. It used to be that when news of unity were heard, tremors ran throughout the Arab world for such news. But now news of unity pass unnoticed, as if they were the news of a marriage or a divorce.

What Yardstick To Adopt?

[Sabra] In your latest statement, in which you criticized the president of the republic yesterday, is there a signal that a certain something that concerns you is going on between Libya and the president, or is it just a message addressed to President Ilyas al-Harawi?

[Birri] First, at the outset of this administration, the Lebanese leadership made a disgraceful visit, because when this leadership arrived at the airport in Libya, there was nobody there to receive it, beginning with Mu'ammarr al-Qadhdhafi. At the time, we underlined this at the Council of Ministers. Now, an invitation is issued and it is announced that Lebanon's president will be attending on the day in which the imam was kidnapped in Libya. At the same time, financial aid is given, whether in the form of a sum of nearly \$1 million or of a number of vehicles or tanks sent to the Lebanese Army. We want to understand. Here, I don't want the issue to be viewed from the angle that Imam Musa al-Sadr is Amal's leader and founder. I want to surpass the special aspect that ties us to the imam and I wish to speak as a Lebanese citizen. We are now in a phase in which the world is shaken by the issue of each country's search for its citizens. An example of this are MIA's, as in the case of the recent war in Iraq in which soldiers have been missing. To regain the bodies of seven Israeli soldiers lost in Lebanon, Israel has turned the world upside down and has demanded their delivery as a main condition for any progress in the hostage release process. Because of two or three Americans, the world has been ruined and

aid for Lebanon continues to be frozen. I don't mean by these words that I support this thing. To the contrary, you know that as a movement, we in Amal have a principled position on the hostage issue. This applies to the British and the French also. A French citizen was kidnapped yesterday and you saw what climate developed between Lebanon and France and between Syria and the entire world until the man was rescued. I don't wish to ask about these hostages' humanitarian and cultural weight in comparison with Imam Musa al-Sadr's weight. I don't wish to raise the issue from this angle. I am speaking as a Lebanese citizen. At that time, Imam Musa al-Sadr was making a tour for peace in Lebanon and to get support for the Riyadh conference, which was tantamount to an endeavor to introduce the Arab Deterrence Forces to Lebanon to rescue it. al-Sadr is the leader of the biggest sect in Lebanon and the most prominent of all the Lebanese leaders. He is a clergyman and chairman of the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council. Moreover, he was the leader and founder of the Movement of the Dispossessed. Well, is it reasonable that the United States should tie all IMF aid for reconstruction and should even pressure Arab countries not to aid Lebanon just because of two hostages? If Lebanon's conditions have not permitted it to move to exert any pressure, and if no means of pressure have been available to it, then the least that can one can ask for is that "If you have no horses and no money to give as gifts, then let your words make one happy, if your condition will not."

Is it reasonable that Lebanon's president or any representative of the Lebanese Government would go and stand on the same podium from which Imam Musa al-Sadr was kidnapped, as if offering absolution before the imam's fate is determined and known. I don't say that he can bring the imam back. But at least let him find out what his fate is. This is why I still cling to my words. As a Lebanese, I cannot consider this man the president of all of Lebanon as long as he abandons Lebanese citizens who have such weight and such respect. This is what I have meant.

[Sabra] Has there been confrontation with the president of the republic?

[Birri] To date, no such thing has happened because, regrettably, the truth is that the al-Ta'if [Accord] or the new constitution is what speaks and that decisions are made in the Council of Ministers. However, I still cling to the words I used months ago to warn and to caution; namely, that things are "concocted" abroad and served in the Council of Ministers, nothing more. That is, if one partakes of the concoction. What I mean is such resolutions as the resolution to participate in the international conference. Imagine that the Council of Ministers discusses the appointment of a sanitary worker but takes no part in such a fateful issue as whether to participate or not participate in the international conference! He who passes the international conference issue can pass an issue of this sort [presumably meaning the president's

participation in the Libyan revolution anniversary celebrations—FBIS]. This issue is tantamount to disregarding Imam al-Sadr's life and blood. I don't know what has truly happened in this issue, which is a very serious issue and which forebodes serious consequences. This is why I have wanted to warn of the matter.

[Sabra] Can the international conference process be accepted in the Council of Ministers?

[Birri] Certainly.

[Sabra] What is the latest Arab or international political endeavor you have made to resolve Imam al-Sadr's case, and when was the latest contact made in this respect?

[Birri] Believe me if I tell you that I have contacted Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi's friends among the African presidents. I have not let any particular mediation or particular approach go untried. I have always tried to make it clear that I really want to "eat grapes" [and not pick a fight with al-Qadhafi—FBIS]. What is required of me, of the Amal Movement, or of the Lebanese Shi'ites? What is required of Lebanon? I am prepared. Let us bring this issue to a conclusion because it cannot be disregarded. It is the issue of a human being. There can be no indifference on an issue like this major Islamic and national issue, which cannot be disregarded. I have entreated and made this request to all the friends, and even to the National Movement leaders, who visited Libya.

[Sabra] In the past?

[Birri] In the past, recently, and whenever I have found the opportunity. My latest contacts were with an African leader whose name shall not remain secret and who has relations with Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi. I asked him to mediate and told him that we are prepared for everything. But the outcome was nil.

[Sabra] Was this done this year?

[Birri] No, at the end of last year.

[Sabra] Well, have you offered a scenario to resolve this issue?

[Birri] Yes, and I have told you about it in my answer to a previous question, when I talked of my communication with President Chadli Bendjedid. I am prepared to go to Libya and to issue a declaration absolving the Libyan regime of this issue, provided that they just send me a message confirming that the imam is alive.

[Sabra] And if Libya says that a certain gang or faction kidnapped Imam Musa al-Sadr and then released him, what would your position be?

[Birri] Libya has to prove to us who this gang is. It must also tell us why it has remained silent until now. It must provide us with the details of the trial of this gang, of the sentences issued against it, and of the steps implemented against it, like any other crime that may be committed.

Qabalan: Al-Qadhafi Suspect

92AE0006E Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic
2 Sep 91 pp 22-23

[Interview with Ja'fari Grand Mufti Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan by Zayn Humud; place and date not given]

[Text] It is the opinion of Ja'fari Grand Mufti Shaykh 'Abd-al-Amir Qabalan that Col. Mu'ammār al-Qadhafi is accused in the concealment issue until proven innocent. The mufti has revealed that he has heard "whispers" from some people that the imam has met his end.

In an interview with AL-SHIRA', the mufti has said that "nobody is interested in the issue. All the officials appease us and laugh at us."

[Humud] Now that 13 years have passed since the imam's disappearance, do you still feel that he is alive?

[Qabalan] The possibility of the Imam Musa al-Sadr and his two companions being alive is still foremost in our mind and our convictions, because life is constant and its perpetuity applies until the inverse is proven. Death is right. But the conclusions, the possibilities, and the interpretations that he has met his end emanate altogether from visions that rely on no firm facts. This is why I support the idea of those who say he is alive until we receive confirmed news that he is dead.

[Humud] Other than feeling and conclusion, do you have information on his being alive?

[Qabalan] There is no information in this connection, neither to confirm nor to refute. This is because there has been a political and information coverup in Imam Musa al-Sadr's issue. No official, big or small, or even officials dealing with intelligence work, has dared give us definite information. All the information revolves around possibilities and probabilities. I don't think that there is any official who has the courage to confront and address the Libyan officials on this issue. How can I base things on his death when al-Qadhafi himself says: "He left Libya for Italy." He has not stated, implied, or hinted that Imam Musa al-Sadr died in Libya or was assassinated in this country. How could I permit myself to say that he has met his end?

[Humud] According to the dictates of the Islamic law, how much time has to pass before a missing or disappearing person is determined to be dead?

[Qabalan] For as long as his family and his children have not demanded that his estate be divided and as long as they don't base their plans on his death. There is nothing to be divided among the heirs. To date, it has not appeared to us or to others that Imam Musa al-Sadr owns money or real estate in order that his heirs may share it. Therefore, our calculations are that it is up to his family, and his family alone, to determine the issue of his

death. Let none of us dare take a negative position on this issue until the truth becomes obvious to everybody with two eyes.

[Humud] Thirteen years have passed since the imam's disappearance was announced. Has there been any interesting development in the disappearance issue to convince you now of what you had not been convinced in the past regarding his being alive or dead, regarding the accusation and against whom it should be made, and regarding the innocence or proven guilt of the accused?

[Qabalan] Regarding convictions, we experienced them in the past. Recently, we have heard whispers from some people to the effect that Imam Musa al-Sadr has met his end in Libya.

[Humud] Whispers by whom?

[Qabalan] By somebody who has a connection with Libya. These whispers may be true. When I asked this party if he had any information, he said: 'No, but the signs indicate it, i.e. indicate that he has died.' I said to the party: 'If al-Qadhdhafi had the courage, he would have spoken to us frankly from the beginning, considering that it is said that he is an innocent party in whose country the problem occurred, he could say that a non-Libyan party perpetrated this act and put him in a dilemma. He could say he wanted to defend himself and so he, or the intelligence, came up with the story that he had departed as a way out.' If al-Qadhdhafi wants our friendship, he can dress the wound and say that such-and-such a party, be it Arab, Islamic, Lebanese, or foreign, is the party that perpetrated this heinous crime and put him in a dilemma, so he had to defend himself in this manner.

[Humud] Is this what has happened or are you proposing a way out?

[Qabalan] If this is how the issue is, then al-Qadhdhafi can say, now that 13 years have passed, that such-and-such a circle created this problem and here are the bodies of so-and-so and such-and-such and you can have them transported by the Red Cross or by any other organization. But for him to ask us for absolution, we don't have the power to absolve him because this issue concerns the sect generally and the imam's family in particular. If he wants to absolve himself, al-Qadhdhafi can tell who the perpetrating party is. Otherwise, he stands accused by us until his innocence is proven. We find him guilty. He is responsible directly for Imam Musa al-Sadr and his two companions. They went to visit him in his country, were given entry visas, and stayed at al-Shati' Hotel. When we called to ask where Imam Musa al-Sadr was...

[Humud] Whom did you ask?

[Qabalan] We asked an al-Shati' Hotel official who answered me: 'He has gone but his al-dabash is still in the hotel.'

[Humud] Al-dabash?

[Qabalan] Yes, al-dabash means luggage. This means that the imam had left in the company of the security people or of somebody who was responsible for him while his luggage remained at the al-Shati' Hotel. The luggage arrived in Italy but we did not find out anything about its owners. They were on their way to go meet al-Qadhdhafi.

[Humud] At what time was the contact made?

[Qabalan] Three or less days after we had lost touch with the imam.

[Humud] Did you call at the time to check on the imam?

[Qabalan] No. I had learned that Imam Musa al-Sadr was not present in Libya. We also decided to send 'Abdallah Musa to Libya to check on the matter. The rumor grew and 'Abdallah Musa did not go. So we called and I was told what I was told, namely that the luggage was still at the hotel, that al-Sadr and his two colleagues had gone out of the hotel, and that it was not known where they had gone. This is why I checked on all details to the end and until al-Qadhdhafi told us when we met him at the Sheraton Hotel in Damascus that the imam had left Libya.

[Humud] How long after the incident?

[Qabalan] Shortly afterward, when the Confrontation and Steadfastness Conference was held.

[Humud] Who did the delegation include?

[Qabalan] It included Shaykh 'Abd-al-Halim al-Zayn, Shaykh Ahmad al-Zayn, and Shaykh Khalil Shuqayr. I led the delegation. We talked to al-Qadhdhafi at a meeting which included the Libyan foreign minister. We asked him about the imam and he said the imam had left Libya. He also asked us whether the imam was of Iranian extraction.

[Humud] What is the significance of this question?

[Qabalan] The significance is that he didn't know Musa al-Sadr. This was prior to the Iranian revolution. There were questions and answers and there was an act which was reported by the press at the time. We do not seek antagonism to al-Qadhdhafi or to anybody. We just tell them that we are not against death because we don't have control over it, and the same goes for life. These things are in God's hand. Everybody will die. They would have spared us many problems and troubles from 1978 to the present if, for example, they had made it clear that he was assassinated and that another faction was involved and if they had said: If you believe us, O Shi'ites, then this is the truth, and if you don't believe us, then you are free not to. We don't have the capability to get to al-Qadhdhafi.

[Humud] We understand from your statements that there has been no interesting development in the issue from 1978 to this time to make you change the conviction you have held since 1978 as to the identity of the

kidnappers. What we mean here is any development in all circumstances and intricacies of the issue.

[Qabalan] I accuse the Arab regimes because they did not cooperate with us. Even the humanitarian organizations did not help us. Even the Security Council, which displays evident interest in the hostages—both with known and unknown origin and lineage—and our Lebanese Government have not shown the required interest!

[Humud] Throughout the different administrations?

[Qabalan] Yes. They have not dared. If they want to appease us and if they say time will make the Shi'ites forget this problem, time will not make us forget. The Shi'ites still mourn al-Husayn who died 1,400 years ago. Imam Musa al-Sadr is not al-Husayn, but we consider him an important figure who faced the world with ambitions and ideas. These ambitions and ideas did not suit the Arab regimes generally, whether friendly or hostile, because they are ideas derived from Islam. I say that nobody has been interested in the issue, that they have been appeasing us, and that they continue to laugh at us. They are convinced that he is dead. Well, I will not be convinced that he has died until I see his body and until they tell us who the killer is. It is certain that if the culprit were an insignificant or weak organization, they would expose it. But the culprit must be important. There may be behind the culprit a major power or a small country which has a vendetta and which could have gotten rid of the man. The culprit could be an organization about which al-Qadhdhafi is afraid to talk. When al-Qadhdhafi disagreed with some Palestinian organizations, they almost exposed each other's cards and nearly disclosed who concealed al-Sayyid Musa al-Sadr. But then a secret hand, and I don't know whose hand it is, intervened and persuaded them to turn this page over and not to reveal each other's secrets. All these things are hidden and confidential. This is why I say that I remain convinced, even though this conviction has been shaken. Previously, I held an unshaken conviction. But now I am convinced that he is alive, even though my conviction is shaky. What I mean is that somebody who says something different from this conviction has entered into the picture. But to date, I am not able to believe, either because of my love for al-Sadr or because of continued conviction. If I want to believe, I should keep my belief to myself and should not declare it. I don't have the courage to declare it. al-Qadhdhafi is also faced with two options: either continue to keep the matter secret, and thus he will continue to owe us, or he expose the parties involved in the issue. We can then bring the culprit to trial.

[Humud] Lebanon's Shi'ite leaders and Libya hold two totally contradictory positions on the issue of Imam Musa al-Sadr's disappearance. Shi'ite leaders say that Libya is responsible for Imam Musa al-Sadr's disappearance and Libya says that the imam left its territories alive. How can the Shi'ites be persuaded that Libya is innocent of this act and how can they believe its allegations?

[Qabalan] Brothers, Libya is responsible for Imam Musa al-Sadr. The departure story was intended to deceive and to cast doubts. After investigating the matter, the Italian judiciary decided that Musa al-Sadr and his two companions never arrived in Italy. This decision refutes all the statements about departure. Shi'ite leaders say that the imam did not leave Libya. Whether dead or alive, the imam is in Libya. Al-Qadhdhafi, as head of state, and his agencies are responsible until it is demonstrated that al-Qadhdhafi's security agencies and his government have been infiltrated [by the guilty party]. He can then save himself and expose them, even if he doesn't wish to do so. al-Sadr didn't die in a car accident, didn't ascend to heaven, didn't descend to the bowels of the earth, and didn't drown at sea. So the only possibility is that he is still alive. If he is still alive, he is there in Libya and if he has died, he is there. If he is alive, let al-Qadhdhafi return him to us and if he is dead...

[Humud] And let bygones be bygones?

[Qabalan] No. If he is alive, then the party concerned is al-Sadr himself, not I. He will decide what to do. He may forgive, may sue, and may keep silent. In al-Sadr's presence, I am not his representative. But if he has died, then I will be grieved and my grief will accompany me to my grave. This is not because we don't want him to die or because he will not die. People we loved as much as we love al-Sadr, even more, died and we have forgotten them. All people will die. But not to know a man's fate and whether he is alive or dead is a farce. If they say that he is dead or alive, then that is alright. But they say that he departed, i.e. he is neither dead nor alive. Where did he leave for? Did he leave for a green isle in Bermuda and disappear there? Where is he? This situation is unacceptable. Words must be supported by facts. If Musa al-Sadr is alive, hand him over to us. If he is dead, deliver the body to us and expose the murderer. Thus, the problem will be ended and we will be able to celebrate his martyrdom as a martyr. We cannot celebrate his concealment. We believe that al-Mahdi is absent because this is our creed. But Imam al-Sadr is not Imam al-Mahdi. al-Sadr is a human being like us and he is either dead or alive.

[Humud] What do the Shi'ites want from Libya now?

[Qabalan] Nothing. Just answer one question: Is al-Sadr alive? If he is alive, let them deliver him to us and if he is dead, let them give us the body and say who killed him.

[Humud] Why don't the Shi'ites demand a new investigation of the case?

[Qabalan] We have and we did send envoys to Libya at the time.

[Humud] I mean now and at the present time?

[Qabalan] Why should I do this. Al-Qadhdhafi is the one who should give me the answer. At the time, we sent Nabih Farhat to Libya. There was also a Lebanese ambassador and a charge d'affaires there.

[Humud] Why hasn't the issue been submitted to the International Court of Justice?

[Qabalan] I have presented all the rules. Why should I have to do this? This man is chairman of Lebanon's Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council. The Lebanese Government has entrusted the case to an attorney and the lawsuit is still alive.

[Humud] But as Shi'ite leaders, you are accused of laxity in this regard.

[Qabalan] No. The developments in Lebanon put us in a difficult dilemma.

[Humud] As long as the issue is raised now and as long as...

[Qabalan] No. But if al-Qadhdhafi wants to rid himself of this issue, then let him invite the Lebanese Government to summon Mustafa al-Kharrubi here because al-Kharrubi was the Libyan intelligence chief when Musa al-Sadr disappeared. al-Kharrubi, after being received by the Government and state of Lebanon—and they did receive him with utter insolence—could have entrusted... If they believe that they are the government, we are the ones who made this government. We are the ones who have permitted them to rise and we can replace them with others. Had we not given our approval, the country could have remained "in ruins." They have shown disrespect for the entire country, not just one half the country, because al-Sadr represents all of Lebanon and not just the Shi'ites. When al-Qadhdhafi wanted to come to Lebanon, we rejected his visit.

[Humud] Why did you reject his visit?

[Qabalan] Al-Qadhdhafi is responsible for Mustafa al-Kharrubi, the intelligence man who may have gotten him embroiled in this issue. We received him and he comes to our country as if it is a country with no people! When a French hostage was kidnapped, all security forces and roadblocks were mobilized in one hour. There were people who could not get to their homes until 0100 because they were subjected to inspection at every roadblock. Why hasn't the government cooperated with us? They know that Musa al-Sadr was a man of peace, not of war. This is why this issue is not important to them. I want the government to move forward and to entrench its presence, even if it is done over my dead body, so that we can rid ourselves of armed elements and militias. The least they can do is to respect us. It would be tragic if they go and take part in the 1 September Revolution celebrations. I want to tell them that we will not do anything secretly. However, even if all the security agencies are deployed in the street, we will cause a problem with everybody. If they are men, let them [dare] go to Libya. No Lebanese official should go to Libya before he learns the true story of Musa al-Sadr. If they will go, then let them bring Musa al-Sadr back with them, and may God reward them. If so, I will agree to go with them.

[Humud] Why is the accusation confined to Libya, keeping in mind that there are other circles or a third party that has an interest in concealing the imam? Libya has no such interest, at least not in concealing him in its territories. If somebody wants to conceal a person, he would not conceal him in his territories.

[Qabalan] This is reasonable. But then let them say who the perpetrators are. I tell al-Qadhdhafi: I have no vendetta with you and I am not about to fabricate a problem with you. I do not wish to fabricate a problem with anybody. I need everybody's friendship and it is out of the question to have hostility for anybody. But I have an issue and it developed on Libyan land. For the sake of the argument, I will acknowledge that al-Qadhdhafi has nothing to do with it. But doesn't he know who the perpetrator is? So why does he want to get me embroiled with him in order to conceal the party that got him embroiled? Let him charge this party and let him say that such-and-such a party is the perpetrator. I am not at all interested in hostility to al-Qadhdhafi. Musa al-Sadr went there seeking al-Qadhdhafi's friendship. Had he wanted al-Qadhdhafi's hostility, al-Sadr would have never gone to visit him.

[Humud] Supposing that Libya declares that the imam may have been concealed in its territory or that it doesn't know anything about the kidnappers or about the imam's fate, what would be your position?

[Qabalan] The accusation will continue to exist. Is the imam a melting grain of salt? Let us assume that al-Qadhdhafi did not know about and was not aware of this issue, has he not come to know and has he not become aware now? If he isn't behind it, hasn't he found out who is behind it now that 13 years have lapsed? Assuming that I acknowledge that he wasn't involved, hasn't he learned who is involved?

[Humud] Regarding contacts, when was the latest contact made, whether by your or by others, in connection with this issue?

[Qabalan] Believe me, our capabilities are limited. We have contacted all circles.

[Humud] When was the latest contact?

[Qabalan] It was a contact with the Islamic Republic [of Iran].

[Humud] In what year, approximately?

[Qabalan] After the revolution triumphed, Imam Khomeyni refused, according to what we were told, to receive al-Qadhdhafi unless he brought Imam Musa al-Sadr in his company. What is important here is that everybody is silent on the issue. Everybody, even the Shi'ite leaders, base their calculations on the assumption that Musa al-Sadr has died. We hold our rallies with utter timidity. I, who used to meet issues head on, have now become timid on this matter. In the Friday sermon, I spoke up and saw that it was insulting to have Mustafa al-Kharrubi visit us. The Israelis, for example, are

demanding the bodies of seven of their soldiers in return for releasing 400 or 500 strugglers they have in detention. In our case, al-Sadr and 'Abbas Badr-al-Din have been missing. Yet, look at how arrogant the Lebanese press is, which hasn't even asked on its pages such a question as: Where is 'Abbas Badr-al-Din? He is a journalist. Let them treat him like Riyadh Taha, for whom an annual anniversary is observed. Let them treat 'Abbas as they treat that photographer who was killed and for whom the Lebanese press holds an annual anniversary.

Sister: Libya Responsible

92AE0006F Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic
9 Sep 91 pp 26-27

[Interview with Mrs. Rabab al-Sadr, Imam Musa al-Sadr's Sister, by Majidah Sabra; place and date not given; "Mrs. Rabab al-Sadr: Murdered Political Figures Had Hand in Imam's Concealment; New Generation Will Avenge Imam; Imam's Issue Is Issue of All Lebanese, Not Just Shi'ites; Let Arab Officials Move To Rescue Imam From International Plot; This Is What Will Persuade Shi'ites That Libya Is Innocent of Imam's Concealment"]

[Text] Concealment of Imam Musa al-Sadr 13 years ago and failure to disclose the circumstances surrounding the issue provoke debate, and at times political storms. This is the case currently in the Lebanese arena, in view of the imam's importance and of the role he performed to preserve Lebanon's unity and to serve the Arabs' primary cause, namely Palestine, and in view of the national line that the imam represents and that is supported by many people and by Lebanese leaders from the various sects.

In this edition, AL-SHIRA'—which opened this dossier in its previous edition with a number of interviews conducted with Shi'ite Islamic spiritual and secular leaders through questions it addressed to them in order to contribute to uncovering the mysterious and intricate circumstances surrounding this important issue—completes the dossier in interviews with Rabab al-Sadr, the imam's sister, and Dr. Muhammad Yasin, the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council member.

Mrs. Rabab al-Sadr, Imam al-Sadr's sister, has revealed that some murdered Arab political figures had a hand in this issue. In an interview with AL-SHIRA', she has expressed the view that the imam's concealment was an international plot executed by al-Qadhdhafi.

[Sabra] Now that 13 years have passed on the imam's disappearance, do you still feel that he remains alive. Aside of feelings, do you have any information?

[al-Sadr] On 31 August, 13 years will have lapsed on Imam al-Sadr's disappearance. Our feeling has not changed and we still await him because one cannot but wait for a person like Imam al-Sadr. We await his return, his stature, and his humanitarianism. Imam al-Sadr is a person who cannot be forgotten easily and his dossier

cannot be closed. We hope well from God. God willing, he is alive and he will return to us hale and sound.

[Sabra] We wonder, weren't there any signs to indicate an attempt to conceal him, or wasn't there an attempt on his life just prior to his concealment?

[al-Sadr] There were signs. Lebanon had gone through difficult years. Even inside Lebanon, several attempts were made on his life but God protected and kept him. It didn't occur to us that there would be a plot against him in Libya. This is what we have found surprising. Libya is ruled by a person who alleges that he flies the Arab nation's slogan and carries the banner of Islam, of the revolution, and of the oppressed. How could a person like Imam al-Sadr be invited and then disappear there, keeping in mind that al-Sadr demanded the rights of the oppressed and of the strugglers?

[Sabra] Is there a missing link?

[al-Sadr] Of course. This is a major international plot executed by al-Qadhdhafi. Therefore, he is the one directly accused of concealing Imam al-Sadr.

[Sabra] From the moment of his disappearance to this moment, has there been any interesting development in the concealment to convince you of what you had not been persuaded previously? Any indications, any signs?

[al-Sadr] If we view what has cropped up from the fist moment to this date, then there are very big and interesting developments. I mean that I can explain them now according to what I have experienced. I did not imagine at any time that all people would seek cover or would conceal the truth and that the officials would evade a reality that has materialized. They all try to absolve al-Qadhdhafi of having a hand in what happened. The development that has happened is the "inhumanity" I have experienced in the rulers' ranks. Their conscience does not rise to the level of the people in charge of affairs in the world. If we don't speak up and say this, would it be easy to conceal the fact? We made contacts at an international level and there have been meetings and interviews with presidents, ministers, officials, and UN people. We have not heard from them a convincing answer or interest. This is the development: Inhumanity, indifference, and disavowal of the issue. We have been left to find our own solution to this catastrophe that has afflicted the Lebanese. If any interest is shown in this issue, it is shown because it serves the interest of those who show it, and not the interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese.

[Sabra] Are there any developments which are convincing to you now but which were not convincing to you in the past to confirm whether the imam is still alive or is dead, God forbid?

[al-Sadr] I cannot determine this issue of life or death. I have no tangible evidence to confirm or to deny. Because I have no evidence to convince me that this issue is over, I build my hopes on the view that the imam is still well.

[Sabra] Regarding the party that you accuse...

[al-Sadr] Libya.

[Sabra] Have there been no new developments to indicate its innocence or to confirm the charge?

[al-Sadr] Libya, in the person of al-Qadhdhafi and his government, stands accused and is responsible for al-Sadr's disappearance. The accusation stands and their responsibility for concealing him will continue forever, unless they prove their innocence. One day, Imam al-Sadr's right will be exacted from al-Qadhdhafi. If this right is exacted, it will be exacted by the new generation. This right will not be squandered. Years may pass, but divine justice will one day exact the imam's right.

[Sabra] Regarding the imam's family, we notice that Mrs. Rabab al-Sadr is the one who speaks on this issue, to the exclusion of the other family members!

[al-Sadr] Imam al-Sadr's wife and his daughter are in Lebanon. The rest of the family members, as well as the imam's brothers, are abroad. If I am, as you say, the one who speaks for the family, it is because since my arrival in Lebanon I have shouldered the responsibility of the social services and of the humanitarian institutions on assignment from the imam. I have been in charge of this work since 1961 and I carry out all that which was founded by the imam, in addition to rendering all the social and humanitarian services he had hoped for.

[Sabra] Regarding the imam's issue, have his sons and brothers made any effort?

[al-Sadr] Yes, they work on one side and I on the other. When I speak about Imam al-Sadr's issue, I speak as a Lebanese and as the imam's family. I do not make a distinction between the imam's bond with the Lebanese and his bond with us. The imam belongs not just to his family but to everybody. When I say we, I mean all the Lebanese.

[Sabra] The Shi'ite leaders and Libya have, and continue to have, two contradictory positions on the imam's disappearance. The leaders say that Libya is responsible for his concealment and Libya says that he departed its territory. How can the Shi'ites be convinced that Libya is innocent of the imam's disappearance?

[al-Sadr] A dossier was published in this regard. Perhaps there are those who still remember it and those who have forgotten it. A complete and comprehensive investigation was conducted in the Italian capital. I went there with the imam's wife and the wives of 'Abbas Badr-al-Din and Shaykh Muhammad Ya'qub. We were all interrogated because he left from my residence. I packed his suitcase. I raised the venerable Koran with my own hand and he passed under it. He said that he would be away for five days and then return.

After it was rumored that he had left Libya for Italy, we filed a lawsuit. The Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council filed suit and we assigned attorneys to follow up on the case.

We went with a group of legal men from the Shi'ite sect. An investigation was conducted by a higher court and it was proven that the imam had not entered Italy's territory and had not departed from Libya.

[Sabra] Prior to his departure, did the imam speak of certain things that betrayed any concern or fear on his part of something unknown?

[al-Sadr] Absolutely not. His trip was normal. As has become known, he visited Algeria and had a meeting with the late Algerian President Houari Boumediene. When the imam's position on the Lebanon war became clear, President Boumediene expressed his admiration for and satisfaction with the imam's position on the existing Lebanese problems. The Algerian president then asked to arrange a meeting between the imam and al-Qadhdhafi. The imam agreed for the sake of Lebanon's interest. He had been planning to conduct an Arab tour. When he received an official invitation to visit Libya through the Libyan Embassy in Beirut, he responded to the invitation on the grounds that he would have a meeting with al-Qadhdhafi so that they could reach an understanding on the Lebanese issue and clarify the vague points. But regrettably...

Shi'ites and non-Shi'ites in every part of the world know and will remain forever convinced that al-Qadhdhafi is the primary culprit in this issue. He hasn't even denied the accusation and he makes illogical statements. A defendant always runs out of things with which to defend himself. What can al-Qadhdhafi say when he is the primary defendant?

[Sabra] But Libya has confirmed that he had left its territories and it has shown a passenger list of the flight heading for Rome. The imam's name and the name of his two companions were listed among the passengers.

[al-Sadr] This is what they say. But the investigation in Italy proved the contrary.

[Sabra] You went to Italy. Didn't you try to go to Libya?

[al-Sadr] And why would we go to Libya?

[Sabra] In an attempt to find out the truth.

[al-Sadr] No meeting will take place between us and al-Qadhdhafi because he is the main and direct defendant in the concealment issue. Why should we meet the defendant? Our going to Libya would have been futile. We went to the Italian judiciary and filed a complaint against the Italian police. A court decision was issued absolving this agency.

[Sabra] What do the Shi'ites want from Libya now?

[al-Sadr] Shi'ites and non-Shi'ites want Imam al-Sadr. The longer the issue drags on, the greater the guilt will be and the greater the revenge.

[Sabra] Why don't the Shi'ites demand that the issue be re-investigated?

[al-Sadr] The judiciary and the legal men have done what they can do. They have all given a report and a firm decision that Imam al-Sadr did not leave Libya's territory and that he is still there. So why should we open the investigation dossier? To waste time?

In the past, an investigation was needed and it was conducted more than once. The Lebanese Government conducted an investigation and the judiciary gave their decision on this issue.

[Sabra] It may be beneficial to reopen the case dossier. It may reveal other aspects of the issue.

[al-Sadr] It is my opinion that the issue has surpassed the bounds of individuals, media, and the law. It has become tied to top officials in all countries, and I mean in the Arab world. If they are interested, then let them revive the issue because it is now beyond our scope. Today, every top official in every country is required to speak up.

[Sabra] Why is the accusation confined to Libya, keeping in mind that there are those who have an interest in concealing the imam and that Libya has no such interest, at least not enough to conceal him in its territory.

[al-Sadr] If al-Qadhdhafi were not a sucker, he would not implement other people's plots in his territories. Regardless of how many papers he counterfeits and how many dossiers he authors, the charge made against him will not be dropped. He has wrapped himself in this issue because he created it. The accusation has been confined to Libya because the imam has been concealed and jailed there. The imam and his companions did not leave Libya.

[Sabra] In your opinion, who has had a hand in this issue?

[al-Sadr] I cannot mention names because the investigations conducted have not disclosed to us anything written or tangible. But our feelings and our speculation tell us that more than one party is involved in this issue.

There are numerous parties whose interest would not have been served had the imam remained free, especially in 1978 when the Lebanon war went through its darkest circumstances and its most difficult phases. Criminal hands tried to silence or to remove anybody who advocated peace in Lebanon because the plots called for the war to continue. It was convenient to have somebody who alleged Arabism and patriotism, like this crazy al-Qadhdhafi, to implement other people's plots and to conceal al-Sadr, thus obstructing his humanitarian role. Those who planned for him to implement this plot may have believed that the imam's role would disappear. But the imam's message has not ended. There are loyal people who continue to follow his path. It is true that they do not have his weight, but they carry on with what he started and planned. Imam al-Sadr, with his personality, was an entire nation.

[Sabra] What if Libya declares that the imam may have been concealed in its territories without its knowledge or that it doesn't know anything about the kidnappers or about the fate of the imam and his companions?

[al-Sadr] Would the enemies believe this from a head of state that is totally built on the military? The Libyan regime is a military regime and there is nothing more abundant there than security people. Every individual has five intelligence people to watch him. So how could the head of a military state allege that the imam and his companions were concealed in his territories without his knowledge? This would be falsehood and hypocrisy similar to al-Qadhdhafi's makeup and presence that is founded on falsehood and hypocrisy. Some people may believe him for a time. But God be thanked, these days have exposed falsehood and hypocrisy to the Arab nation. What the Arab nation is experiencing has dropped the masks from all the false faces.

[Sabra] The Lebanese authorities are censured for being lax. What could Lebanon do regarding this issue?

[Sabra] I don't think that the Lebanese authorities have been lax. Lebanon is regaining its powers and its health now. I don't think that Lebanon, as a government, could have done more than what it has done. There were individuals in sensitive positions and they could have developed programs with other countries to rescue Imam al-Sadr.

[Sabra] What is required of Lebanon now?

[al-Sadr] Lebanon has stood on its own feet now. We hope that the Lebanese authorities will reopen this dossier and will reveal secrets that have continued to be hidden.

[Sabra] What is the latest effort you have made to revive the issue?

[al-Sadr] Contacts and endeavors have constantly been made far from the press and the media, keeping in mind that we have not reached the conclusion we wish and hope for. This is why things are kept confidential. Two very significant endeavors may have been made at an international level. People who were prepared for this issue went to follow the threads of this issue. Upon reaching a certain point, the doors were shut in their face and they lost the beginning of the thread.

[Sabra] Who?

[al-Sadr] I don't know. But when we got close to the end of the thread, doors were shut in the face of those who made this attempt in the country to which they went.

[Sabra] Is this country in Europe?

[al-Sadr] Yes. This is an international issue. In Europe particularly, we have obtained files that indicate that some murdered Arab political figures had a hand in this issue.

There is no door on which we have not knocked and we have no means left untried. As individuals, we have accomplished nothing. So, states have to move. The State of Lebanon should take this issue into consideration.

Council Member on Issue

92AE0006G Beirut AL-SHIRA' in Arabic 9 Sep 91 p 28

[Interview with Dr. Muhammad Yasin, Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council Member, by Najah Sharaf-al-Din; place and date not given; "Dr. Muhammad Yasin to AL-SHIRA': Al-Sadr's Role in Lebanon Is Reason for His Concealment"]

[Text] Dr. Muhammad Yasin, a Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council member, has urged the Lebanese Government to deal with Imam Musa al-Sadr's issue realistically and honestly, expressing the belief that this is the only way for it to gain credibility among the Lebanese, especially the Shi'ite sect.

AL-SHIRA' has conducted the following interview with Dr. Yasin on the 13th anniversary of Imam al-Sadr's disappearance:

[Sharaf-al-Din] Now that 13 years have passed since Imam al-Sadr's disappearance, do you still feel that he is alive? Aside from feelings, do you have any information?

[Yasin] We believe that he is still alive as long as there is no information to confirm the opposite.

[Sharaf-al-Din] From the time his disappearance was announced to this moment, has there been an interesting development to persuade you of what you had not been convinced previously.

[Yasin] We still hold the same convictions insofar as his life is concerned, even though we believe, after all that has happened in Lebanon throughout the 15 years of war, that concealment of the imam is not a small problem or an individual issue, but a premeditated act perpetrated against the Shi'ite sect and its important role within the context of the dictates of the Lebanon war. al-Sadr is the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council chairman. The role the Council and its chairman played was an important role for Lebanon and for the south. We believe that these are some reasons, or the most important reasons, for his concealment.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Lebanese Shi'ite leaders and Libya hold two contradictory positions on the imam's disappearance. The leaders say that Libya is responsible for his concealment and Libya says he departed its territories alive.

How can the Shi'ites be persuaded that Libya is innocent of the imam's concealment?

[Yasin] The Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council and all sincere Shi'ites and non-Shi'ites have demanded a fair investigation. I believe that the investigations conducted

have led to one conclusion, namely that the Imam entered Libya and did not leave it.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Why is the accusation confined to Libya, keeping in mind that there are those who have an interest in concealing the imam and that Libya has no such interest in concealment, at least not in its territories?

[Yasin] Libya is responsible for its security and for those who are in its territories, especially if they are official guests and are as weighty as the imam and represent what he represents. Therefore, Libya is responsible for disclosing the truth so that the world can know who was behind the crime of concealing Imam al-Sadr and who had an interest in this concealment.

Piracy

[Sharaf-al-Din] What if Libya declares that the imam was concealed in its territories without its knowledge or that it doesn't know a thing about the kidnappers and about the fate of the imam and his companions?

[Yasin] This is one way to complicate the issue anew, rather than be brave and courageous, disclose the truth, and develop a solution that saves face for everybody. The Shi'ite sect cannot remain silent on such a piratical act and on persistence in concealing the issue and disdaining people's feelings and minds. If the imam is alive, then let him be released, and if he is dead, let his body be handed over out of respect for human values, at least.

[Sharaf-al-Din] Shi'ite leaders fault the Lebanese authorities for being lax. What could these authorities do regarding this issue?

[Yasin] Imam al-Sadr's issue is not just the issue of the Shi'ite sect alone, but of all Lebanon and of all the values and principles for which the Higher Shi'ite Islamic Council and the sincere Lebanese, Arabs, and Islamists have worked. It is unacceptable that any government—especially since the Lebanon war has ended and the Lebanese, led by the Shi'ite Muslims, have rallied behind the legitimate government—should deal with Imam al-Sadr's concealment lightly and disdainfully. It is our opinion that the issue should be resolved realistically and with determination to have the truth revealed and told. On this issue, the Lebanese Government has no other option, because only in this way will it gain credibility among its people, especially among the Shi'ite sect in Lebanon. It will do this government no good to win Libya's and the world's friendship if the people don't support it and don't agree with what it does.

[Sharaf-al-Din] What is the latest endeavor or contact made to revive Imam al-Sadr's issue?

[Yasin] Through the Council, we have done what could be done. It is not an easy issue, and it deserves that everything possible be done to uncover its ambiguities and reach a satisfactory conclusion. In our opinion, this requires courage, honesty, and objectivity from all

brothers and friends. We say enough. Everybody must know what happened exactly and an end must be put to this tragedy.

Controversy Over Administrative Division Plans Viewed

91AE0622A London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 29,
30 Aug 91

[Article by Muhammad Shuqayr: "Politicians Vie for Redistricting To Suit Their Parliamentary Ambitions"]

[29 Aug 91 p 2]

[Text] The redistricting that the Karami government is getting ready to implement in future cabinet meetings is still a matter of contention among politicians seeking to "tailor it to their own needs." This is especially in view of its direct relationship to the new electoral law governing parliamentary elections, which Prime Minister 'Umar Karami is determined to hold in the summer of 1992 in response to an international and regional call for these elections as a "milestone" on the road to the country's full recovery.

The discussion of preparations to draft a new electoral law coincides with misgivings expressed by partisan powers who are afraid of losing the major part of the parliamentary seats they acquired through appointments to vacant or newly-created posts. They are making efforts at all levels to obtain guarantees that they can count on to dispel their fear of flunking the "popular test" should the electoral law fail to fit their agenda and a decision be made to institute a redistricting plan designating the province, rather than the administrative district, as a constituency.

The misgivings the partisan powers are expressing at this time are "legitimate," given the fact that there is no going back on the decision to institute the redistricting plan while retaining the five-province set-up (Beirut, Jabal Lubnan, al-Janub, al-Biqā', and al-Shamal). Those who tried to effect a compromise between the advocates of the redistricting plan and the proponents of the old districting system—which designated the administrative district as a constituency, whereby the new constituency would be larger than an administrative district and smaller than a province—awakened to the fact that their endeavors clashed with a Lebanese-Syrian accord to designate the province rather than the administrative district as a constituency.

The opponents of the new plan base their argument on their concern for their electoral fate, in terms of their inability to exercise the role of the "first constituent," who has the power to determine the outcome of the elections. This is not to mention the privileges accorded them under the current electoral law.

As for the redistricting plan's proponents, they feel that the abolition of the old system is bound to undermine all endeavors aimed at running the election campaign as in

the past, in particular 1968, when a tripartite alliance—composed of the late president, Camille Sham'un; the leader of the National Bloc, Raymond Iddih; and the founder of the Phalangist Party, Shaykh Pierre al-Jumayyil—was formed to run for election on a unified slate in al-Matn al-Shamali, al-Matn al-Janubi, Kisrwan, and Jubayl against the proteges of late president Fu'ad Shihab, under the motto of "protecting and defending democracy" in the face of those seeking to "militarize" civilian life in Lebanon.

Those proponents believe that the inception of the "tripartite alliance" was aimed at safeguarding general liberties; creating a "Christian tendency;" being able to deliver the definitive decision in presidential elections; and providing the necessary immunity to stop the Palestinians—who had been flooding into the country after the 1967 setback—from turning Lebanon into an alternate homeland. This is apart from the fact that this tendency was able to withstand the growing leftist influence in view of the installation of the late Kamal Junblatt, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party [PSP], as leader of the leftist parties' front, which was formed under his leadership and embarked on its activity under his cloak.

This group contends that the tripartite alliance's primary obsession was to safeguard Lebanon's identity and to stop Lebanon from drifting behind the anti-West Arab regimes. This was prompted by their belief that the only way to resist the left is by reorganizing the ranks of the so-called hawks among the Maronites.

These may be the "historical reasons" for the determination to hold parliamentary elections within the provincial framework. As for the political reasons, they are rooted in the redistricting plan advocates' sense that, in order to protect the national conciliation process, all forms of sectarianism ought to be frustrated, and cooperation among the Lebanese denominations heightened, with a view to melting the Lebanese population into the pot of allegiance to the state, rather than to the denomination or those who install themselves as its sole defenders.

Accordingly, acceding to the redistricting plan might undercut the fanatic tendency among the Lebanese denominations who will find themselves compelled to emerge from their isolation into an enlarged country, and obliged to open up to and cooperate with everyone, in view of the candidates' perception that they need to propose platforms that transcend the administrative district, especially if the district's residents are made of the same mold, and are of a specific sectarian color.

In other words, the candidates will be compelled to renounce their fanaticism and open up to the idea of cooperating with candidates from other denominations, be it by forming a united slate composed of representatives from all the various denominations in the province, or by forming a coalition of several partisan powers or candidates from different denominations.

Thus, the holding of parliamentary elections based on the redistricting plan will bring about the demise of powers, in the sectarian or partisan sense of the word, whereupon a group of candidates known as the strongest of the weak would emerge and be compelled to revise their calculations and firmly establish a new formula for alliances capable of combining people of different, not to mention conflicting, political schools.

Now that their hope of seeing their regional or sectarian concerns and apprehensions addressed—by giving them the right to redistrict Jabal Lubnan into more than one electoral district—has been dashed, the redistricting plan has prompted the political powers to form new alliances or search for new coalition formulas.

If the PSP, the most cohesive electoral power, has expressed its apprehension about the redistricting plan, its "brothers" in the Amal Movement and other parties share its apprehension, albeit in varying degrees, based on their inability to act independently in parliamentary elections without cooperating with new allies (from the traditional political guard, to be exact) who have managed to retain their positions and not fallen apart, as some people believe, under the trials and tribulations of the civil war. Now that they have tested the advocates of modernization and rebellion against the old system, holding it responsible for all the country's woes and calamities, many people are yearning for the traditionalists.

New political powers may find themselves compelled to cooperate with tradition, among those who in the past opposed the symbols of tradition, in the south in particular, on the pretext that they do not pose a threat to their political influence, unlike the traditional leaders who have remained in the villages and towns of the south.

Furthermore, the Lebanese Forces, along with the traditional Christian figures, are wary of the Christian scene, the 'Awn tendency in particular, that has not yet been tested electorally, and are trying to build bridges with parties who did not share the same trenches with them during their war with Gen. Michel 'Awn.

Although the configuration of electoral alliances has not yet emerged, waiting for the electoral coalition map to unfold, the only thing that can be said is that, under the new electoral law, the notion of powerful parties able to run for elections independently without turning to others will be eliminated.

This discussion is relevant to the politicians' fears, which may be justified should the displacement issue be kept on ice and not considered before the decision is made to call the voters to the polls.

[30 Aug 91 p 2]

[Text] Why does the PSP have misgivings about the redistricting plan establishing the province as a new constituency? Are its misgivings justified? What fate awaits the other political powers, who do not enjoy the

same influence in Jabal Lubnan they enjoy in the other four provinces? PSP circles express the party's legitimate misgivings on the basis of the following considerations:

Jabal Lubnan Province includes the districts of Jubayl, Kisirwan, al-Matn al-Shamali, al-Matn al-Janubi, 'Alayh, and al-Shuf, represented by 31 parliamentary seats distributed as follows: 17 seats for the Maronites, 5 for the Druze, 3 for the Shi'ah, 2 each for the Sunni and Greek Orthodox; and 1 each for the [Greek] Catholics and Armenians. This means that the number of Druze, Shi'ah, and Sunni deputies is less than one-third of the overall number of parliamentary seats.

Accordingly, the PSP feels that the Druze denomination would be the weakest link, and therefore, have no impact on the final outcome of the elections, and that it may indeed turn into a marginal power, should the former rivalry between the constitutionalists—in reference to late president Bisharah al-Khuri and the National Bloc partisans, when former president Emile Iddih, father of Raymond Iddih, led the National Bloc Party—be renewed, although such a rivalry is unlikely at this point and may shift to other Christian blocs under formation.

The PSP fears being ranked a secondary power on the chart of Christian alliances preparing to join the parliamentary election campaign, hence its demand to merge the Provinces of Beirut and Jabal Lubnan into one constituency to achieve a balance whereby the Maronites will cease to be the number-one denomination in Jabal Lubnan; or to divide Jabal Lubnan into two constituencies, one comprising the districts of 'Alayh, al-Shuf, and al-Matn al-Janubi (B'abda), and the other confined to the districts of Jubayl, Kisirwan, and al-Matn al-Shamali.

The PSP believes that the partition of Jabal Lubnan into two constituencies would block a Maronite monopoly, should the Maronites agree to run in elections on a coalition slate, and would diminish Maronite influence in the constituency of al-Shuf, 'Alayh, and al-Matn al-Janubi in favor of the other denominations, should these denominations forge an electoral deal, because the number of Maronite deputies in these districts would be less than the others by a ratio of 10 seats for Muslims and other denominations to eight seats for the Maronites.

If the Karami government fails to draw up a timetable for the displaced to return to their towns, villages, and properties, albeit in stages, the PSP fears that the displaced may cast their vote in favor of its rivals. This is notwithstanding the fact that it has been trying to assimilate them, in the political sense of the word, and establish good relations with them, either by emphasizing its continued cooperation with the National Liberal Party [NLP], the strongest traditional power in Jabal Lubnan, or by extending lines to the pro-'Awn tendencies, even though they have been cut off since last October, when 'Awn was driven away by the Lebanese legitimacy and the Syrian army.

Therefore, the PSP fears a Christian reaction that would sweep away the political openness it initiated a few years

ago, either through its close cooperation with the NLP or through its openness to a group of Christian figures and tendencies that are at odds with the Phalangist Party and the Lebanese Forces, since such a reaction would view the freeze on the return of the displaced as a fertile political issue to be used against the Druze, and Minister Junblatt personally, with a view to holding him directly responsible for the displacement that occurred in Jabal Lubnan.

Amid the misgivings the PSP has expressed, the following question remains: What kind of a political escape does Minister Junblatt have to lay the foundation for a "political balance" to make up for the "numerical imbalance" among the voters in Jabal Lubnan to get a grip on the situation, beginning with parliamentary elections and ending with the future of political life in Jabal Lubnan, and hence, in Lebanon as a whole.

This question was answered by an authoritative cabinet source closely linked to contacts going on behind the scenes under the motto, "exchange of misgivings and apprehensions about most politicians." He said Minister Junblatt's woes will not necessarily lead him to an impasse, and that he has enough political initiatives he can take to allay his fears and join the game as one of the strongest constituents.

At this point, the cabinet source talked about two initiatives Minister Junblatt can take without delay. The first has to do with setting a timetable to secure the phased return of the displaced to al-Shuf and 'Alayh in the context of a general agreement sponsored by the cabinet. The second is related to a course of action to be immediately initiated toward establishing alliances that must not be seasonal, or in other words, must not cater to electoral interests, but rather, ones that can evolve into a political understanding, beginning with an electoral coalition and ending with lasting cooperation. The cabinet source said that the displaced Christians, while they now represent a negative force in the face of Minister Junblatt opposing him at the polls, may, at the speed of sound, turn into a lasting source of strength for him, should they become convinced that the PSP leader is the spearhead that can pave the way for their return to their towns and villages, especially since the main concern of the displaced has been to regain their property and possessions. Otherwise, the others can keep them as a kind of fuel to be used in the future, as they have been used in the past, as a human shield to defend their political plans. The cabinet source admits that, as far as the displaced are concerned, the displacement issue, albeit complicated due to the dire need for economic and financial aid as a prerequisite for its resolution, is better than nothing, as is the case now.

The cabinet source said that Kamal Junblatt's success in striking first to open the door for the return of the displaced would permit him to take under his wing most of the Jabal Lubnan Christians who are skeptical about the Christian leadership. This is provided that he does not give the idea that his actions are prompted by a deal

concluded between the Druze and Maronites to the exclusion of everyone else or, in other words, preparations for the return of the displaced must seem part of an integrated security, political, economic plan pioneered by him.

As for the other side of the initiative—namely Minister Junblatt's current efforts to search for a coalition formula by reaching an accord with the Christians—the cabinet source emphasized to AL-HAYAH that the upcoming parliamentary elections will be quite different from the previous ones, which means that it is inconceivable to return to the electoral climates of 1968 and 1972, with respect to the formation of a new tripartite alliance, especially one of a different kind.

The end of the war in Lebanon, which witnessed battles between Gen. Michel 'Awn, the Lebanese Forces, and the Phalangist Party, has proved to be a hindrance to the formation of Christian alliances with an electoral weight similar to the ones that were behind the inception of the "tripartite alliance" in the 1968 elections. This paves the way for Minister Junblatt to firm up his alliance with preeminent Christian figures who have political weight in Jabal Lubnan.

The cabinet source stressed that the Phalangist Party and the Lebanese Forces support the formation of a coalition in Jabal Lubnan, and are indeed fighting for it; and that they have submitted, through an intermediary, two separate offers to Minister Junblatt and other influential politicians in Jabal Lubnan who have been content to receive the offers, but have not responded.

The cabinet source added that all parties in Jabal Lubnan need a coalition because their special situations do not allow them to run for parliamentary elections under the motto, "either I will kill or be killed," and that some of these parties rank themselves as the strongest of the weak in Jabal Lubnan.

The source went on to say: "Talk about the political situation in Jabal Lubnan and the political alliance map does not really mean that attention is focused on Jabal Lubnan Province to the exclusion of all others, but suggests that everyone feels that redistricting based on the five provinces will encounter problems only in Jabal Lubnan. This is in contrast with Beirut, al-Janub, al-Shamal, and al-Biq'a', because the margin of difference among voters there is not as alarming as in Jabal Lubnan."

The source added that misgivings expressed by the political powers whose main influence is in regions geographically and administratively located outside Beirut and Jabal Lubnan, are not as strong as those of the PSP, the Lebanese Forces, and the Phalangist Party, even though they have already been credited with the "'Awn tendency" that carries weight in the Jabal Lubnan administrative districts. The source believes that the political powers in the three provinces may not find it difficult to agree on a coalition formula, especially since the traditional powers, or some of them at least,

maintain relations with the political parties. Al-Janub may be the only exception to this rule, in view of the existing conflict between former speaker of the house Kamil al-As'ad, the Amal Movement, and political figures who maintain a presence along the geographical line from al-Zahrani River to the districts of Nabatiyah, Sidon, and Bint-Jubayl, and all the way to Marj 'Uyun-Hasbayya.

In light of all this, will parliamentary elections be held in the summer of 1991? Or, are senior officials saying that the need to get them done is an attempt to reinforce their position vis-a-vis the West, which is calling for elections as soon as possible under the guise of reassurances that the Lebanese Government is preparing to hold them? And are senior officials saying that most of its members, who were appointed to vacant and newly-created parliamentary positions, would like to return to parliament, but this time through the implementation of the al-Ta'if Agreement, after they had joined it under the agreement to end the war and consecrate the national conciliation process?

An answer to this question may be premature. Some think it likely that municipal elections will be held as a gateway to parliamentary elections, while others are calling for the holding of parliamentary elections, thereby paving the way for the government to prepare for municipal elections. This is not to mention that the continued Israeli occupation of part of al-Janub and western al-Biqa' is prompting some sides to oppose those advocating the appointment of representatives from the occupied regions.

About the ability to hold parliamentary elections amid the Syrian presence in Lebanon, some people believe that these elections would coincide with the Syrian troop remassing deadline, at which time we may save ourselves any embarrassment caused by the condition that elections be held under Lebanese security supervision and in the absence of any Syrian military presence.

MOROCCO

Parties Condemn Polisario Tactics

92AF0046B London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic
3 Oct 91 p 1,4

[Excerpts] Rabat—As the drama of the Western Sahara is drawing to a close, all the parties to the conflict having approved the UN Secretary General's plan for a ceasefire beginning 6 September, and following the arrival of observer groups charged with preparing for the proposed referendum to be held in early next year, the Moroccan parties have accused the Polisario Front of trying to sabotage the UN Secretary General's plan for the referendum.

The Independence Party (opposition) believes that the Polisario is trying to circulate incorrect interpretations of the Secretary General's plan by alleging that the factor

of tribal affiliation should not be taken into consideration in determining the list of those entitled to vote in the referendum.

The party considers this allegation to be contrary to Section 20 of the Secretary General's plan, which provides for determining the identity of the persons entitled to vote in the referendum through consultation with the Sahara tribal chiefs.

It also considers the Polisario request to allow its fighters to enter the Sahara on the basis of the principle of equal treatment is a clear admission by the Front of the nonexistence of liberated lands in Western Sahara.

Likewise, the Socialist Union of the People's Forces [USFP] (opposition) has called for reconsidering the question of reducing the number of the Moroccan Armed Forces and for Morocco to maintain all its forces in the Sahara in order to defend Moroccan sovereignty and maintain peace and security in the Sahara.

This call comes after the recent statement by the Polisario Front defense minister who said that the Front will take up arms again if it loses the referendum, and by the Front's Foreign Minister Mustapha Ould Saleck, who said that Spain never expelled Saharan citizens to northern Morocco. [passage omitted]

The Socialist Union sees the Polisario Front leaders as confirming the validity and legality of Morocco's reservations and objections to the measures contained in the Secretary General's plan that are likely to be misinterpreted by the Front and to be used against Morocco's sovereignty.

The Moroccan News Agency [MAP] said that the allegation that Spain did not expel Saharan citizens to northern Morocco, and that it should intervene in the Secretary General's plan in order to impose the referendum it carried out in 1974 means inviting Spain to revive its colonial history that existed in past years.

MAP said that the Polisario foreign minister was studying the Arabic language in Laayoune in 1968 when he was expelled to the north. He obtained a baccalaurate (general secondary) diploma in Marrakech and continued his higher studies in France, thanks to a Moroccan grant. [passage omitted]

Parties' Approach to June Elections Noted

92AF0046A London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic
8 Oct p 9

[Report by Talhah Jibril]

[Text] Rabat—If things go well and no surprises crop up, parliamentary elections will take place next June, that is, after seven months. These will be unlike previous elections, and the indications of this are many.

Perhaps the most significant sign is the existing alliance between the main two opposition parties, the Independence Party and the Socialist Union of the Popular Forces [USFP]. Leaders of the two parties say privately that they will run in the coming elections jointly if the elections' integrity is guaranteed.

Two possibilities are likely in this regard:

First, that the two parties agree on nominating one candidate to represent them in certain constituencies, in which case the nomination will be restricted to the leadership of both parties. The second possibility is that the two parties will coordinate in order to present one candidate in all the electoral constituencies.

Customarily, each party is assigned one single color as the symbol of its candidates in all the constituencies. It is worth noting here that the color with which the Independence Party ran in the elections the last time was blue while the USFP's color was yellow.

If the wishes of leaders of both parties come true, the blue and yellow colors will be mixed, so the experts of color mixing must come out with a new color.

Mahjoubi Aherdane, the USFP leader who, in addition to being a politician who occupied several official posts, writes French poetry and paints, was once asked about his favorite poem. He said it was a poem which, in translation, says: "You chicken, is all this screaming just for one egg?"

If the Independent Party and the USFP members wish to run in the coming elections with a single list, the situation is different with the National Union of the Popular Forces [UNFP] which has split into three parties: the National Popular Movement under Aherdane's leadership, the Popular Movement under the leadership of Mohamed Laensar, the incumbent postal minister, and the Democratic Constitutional Popular Movement led by Abdelkarim el Khatib.

The problem of the three parties is that the gap between them is widening. Therefore, it is unlikely that any coordination will take place in the coming elections. Consequently, nobody knows in what condition "Aherdane's chicken" is going to be when the electors go to the polls.

SUDAN

Police, Public Security Rift Intensifies

92P40027A London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic
21 Oct 91 p 1

[Text] Sudanese sources yesterday informed AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that the crisis continues between the police force and the government, and that the tension which prevailed after an assault on a police officer by members of the Public Security Organization [PSO] had not abated as of yesterday evening.

The sources said that police officers today rejected a statement received by their chief, Lt. Gen. 'Oud Khujly, from Deputy Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Interior Minister Maj. Gen. al-Zubayr Muhammad Salih, asserting that "the authorities" had arrested the security people who attacked police officer First Lt. Mu'awiya Ja'fir and had taken them to the public prosecutor for interrogation.

The police officers said that any arrest of the suspects must be carried out by the police; likewise, their detention must be in regular police cells and not in the public prosecutor's office.

According to these sources, Khartoum police chief Maj. Gen. Ahmad Qamur al-Dawlah tendered his resignation because of the disorder in security and the assault upon that officer. Also, Maj. Gen. Ahmad al-Murtady, chief of the Emergency Forces, warned that if the PSO did not hand over the suspects, "we will storm their headquarters and arrest them ourselves." Communications and negotiations continued through yesterday to contain the situation, exacerbated by the police's threat that they would break the door lock to get in.

WESTERN SAHARA

Polisario Tactics, Ministers Denounced

92AF0035C Rabat L'OPINION in French
5 Oct 91 pp 1-2

[Commentary by Naim Kamal: "Flight Forward"; quotation marks as published]

[Text] Ibrahim Ghali, that cardboard ogre, that paper camel, whose title of minister of defense of the "SDAR" [Saharan Democratic Arab Republic] is valid only as far as the first two syllables of his title are concerned, wants to make us shake with fear. "If Morocco wins the referendum," he said (which, by the way, is a sure thing), the Polisario would again take up arms against our country.

Already before him [as published], the "Polisario's" foreign relations charge d'affaires, Bachir Sayed, stated in New York that if Morocco were to win the referendum, many "Polisario" members would not integrate into Morocco. That was during the diplomatic stage preparatory to the referendum, and B. Sayed's statements may have been taken for a "constructive" position that would provide for a good retreat after the defeat, thanks to misappropriated humanitarian aid money. In view of the facts, Ibrahim Ghali's statement to the Spanish press turns out to be a veiled rather than an explicit threat.

If it was only up to us, we could choose how to react. Ignore them or laugh at them, for two simple small reasons:

First, because they testify to the "Polisario's" confusion and disclose its gnawing doubt as far as winning at the polls is concerned.

Then, because if Ibrahim Ghali's weapons and men were worth their salt, the "Polisario" would not still be biting sand and moping in detainees camps.

But the international community, and the United Nations in the first place, have a duty to take Ibrahim Ghali's statements seriously, because they are not a joke or a statement to the media designed to save face, but denote a real intent in line with the "Polisario's" behavior and supported by its record.

Past the stage of the "center of revolution" that was meant to spread to the entire Maghreb and establish the rule of the proletariat and the small farmers, the "Polisario" adopted a secessionist strategy, with the avowed goal of creating a State to replace the Moroccan Sahara. In the eyes of the "Polisario," the self-determination referendum is useful only to the extent that it enables it to achieve this objective. And it is in this respect that the digression of the UN general secretary, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, wishing for an agreement like the "Evian" agreement that settled the question of Algeria's independence, confirmed by a referendum, proves imprudent and regrettable.

Guerrilla methods are known, and now hackneyed. Once the strategy has been set, it all boils down to tactics, modified every season to reflect changing conditions, like a snake molting.

When the Sahara issue was first raised, the "Polisario," which then believed that a war of attrition could give it a military victory, proclaimed its armed self-determination. This led to the rash proclamation of the "SDAR."

From this decidedly "revolutionary" point of view, it tried to maneuver Spain, the former colonial power, into denouncing the Madrid agreement.

Acts of terrorism, training for Basque independence fighters, attacks against Spanish trawlers, capture of hostages who were then handed over to Spanish authorities publicly and with impunity: the "Polisario's" destabilization experts stopped at nothing to win the international decision.

And in 1986, when the OAU could at last hope to find an African solution to the conflict, thanks to Morocco's cooperation, the "Polisario" and its supporters, feeling that the wind was turning, sabotaged the referendum that the implementation committee was preparing, and illegally managed to have the SDAR admitted in the African organization, according to the principle of "armed self-determination."

It is this reasoning, which puts peace efforts in jeopardy, that still guides the "Polisario's" approach and for which it wishes to prepare international public opinion.

Certainly, per se, the "Polisario" forces are powerless against the vigilance of Morocco and the Royal Armed Forces. But grafted on uncertain conditions in the Maghreb—domestic situations in a state of transition, bilateral tensions which the UMA [Arab Maghreb Union] is hardly able to contain—and combined with ethnic problems in Mauritania and among the Touaregs, the position of the "Polisario" could benefit from, as much as encourage the destabilization of the African Northwest, and provide a Trojan horse for certain extremist groups in the Maghreb that are continually attempting a flight forward and are still looking for a place from where to start, among a disorder that would perpetuate their kind of order.

Tribal Role in Voter Identification Crucial

92AF0035B Rabat L'OPINION in French
2 Oct 91 pp 1, 3

[Commentary by Jamal Hajjam: "All Moroccan Saharans Have the Right To Go Back to Sahara and Vote in the Referendum; Tribal Criterion Remains Vital in Identifying Voters"—first paragraph is L'OPINION introduction; quotation marks]

[Text] As the referendum process progresses, the "Polisario [Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro]," caught in the vise as it is, and unable to accept the rules of the democratic game, seems to be hopelessly struggling in the hope of clouding the issue and casting doubt in the mind of the people. Nevertheless, it has lost the battle, just as it lost those that preceded it, because that battle relied on propaganda lies that no longer deceive anybody.

After trying to have public opinion believe that Morocco "violates" the cease-fire and vainly attempting to influence the UN mission by claiming that Morocco was about to organize a new Green March toward the Sahara, the secessionists and mercenaries of the "Polisario" are now going one step further and interfere directly and intolerably with the UN responsibilities, while attempting to misrepresent the UN peace plan in order to promote their separatist views.

The "Polisario's" latest tall story was the "information memorandum" sent on Monday to the Algiers press, following the UN special representative's tour of the region; in the memorandum, the secessionists called for the withdrawal of "marchers" they said had arrived in the Moroccan Sahara in the past few days.

In other words, they ask that Moroccan Saharans, provided with all the necessary evidence, leave the regions they originally came from, which is quite ridiculous. It is like asking Doukkalis to leave the Doukkalas, or Rifins to leave the Rif, etc.

To crown its impudence, the "Polisario" rejects the "tribal criterion proposed by Morocco" to identify the electorate because, it says, it is "contrary to the spirit and the letter of the UN peace plan."

This quite simply demonstrates that the "Polisario" lacks confidence both in its abilities and in its "cause," which by the way was prefabricated. When it claims that the tribal criterion is "contrary to the spirit and the letter of the peace plan," it openly strikes a blow to that very peace plan and to the report of the UN general secretary that adopted this very point as one of the main components of the identification process.

Just refer to Article 20 of the UN general secretary's latest report, which provides that "the (identification) commission's mandate will include, in particular, the updating of the 1974 census: (a) by deleting from the lists the name of individuals who have since died; (b) by examining the applications of people who state they have the right to vote in the referendum because they are Saharans and were not included in the 1974 census. **THE TRIBAL CHIEFS OF WESTERN SAHARA WILL BE ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMMISSION'S WORK.**" [as published]

It is thus crystal clear. When the report requires tribal chiefs to contribute to the identification commission's work, it means that the United Nations rely precisely on the tribal criterion as the most important....

The role of the tribal chiefs and witnesses will be to confirm or deny that applicants belong to the Saharan provinces, based on their tribal affiliation.

Because the social structure in Sahara consists of tribes, nomad tribes moreover, the 1974 Spanish census cannot claim to cover all the sons of the Sahara.

As the Spanish census is marred by imperfections, errors, and omissions, something which is now clear to everyone, tribal affiliation remains the best proof to determine the identity of individuals, and the best means to ensure that the identification process is just, equitable, and impartial.

Add to this that the Spanish census was restricted to certain groups and ignored others for colonial purposes, and therefore did not count the Saharans who had fled Spanish colonialism and colonial persecution at various times in history. These people are fully entitled to be included on the electoral rolls, precisely because of their tribal affiliation, and they are the very same individuals that the "Polisario" calls sometimes "settlers," sometimes "marchers" and that, through its claims and its outdated and obsolete propaganda, it attempts to prevent from voting in the referendum. First of all, these individuals are Moroccan Saharans who have the right to travel wherever they wish over the entire Moroccan territory, including precisely the Sahara over which Morocco has full sovereignty.

Second, at no time does the peace plan prohibit Moroccan Saharans from returning to their regions of origin.

If the "Polisario" believes that those who "claim to be Saharans should file individual applications and wait for the commission's answer," it is obviously quite off base.

These individuals do not claim to be Saharans, they are Saharans and are able to prove it. This is what makes the mercenaries feel so helpless.

And then, this does not prevent them from traveling freely in their own country.

In addition, their return to the regions from which they originally came can only make the UN mission's task easier, knowing that, displaced or not, they are determined to prove their identity and exercise their right to vote in the referendum as Moroccan Saharans.

All this leads us to the conclusion that, by using means of this type, the "Polisario" not only interferes with the responsibilities of the United Nations—which alone are qualified to decide what is and what is not in keeping with the spirit and the letter of the peace plan—but it also betrays itself and discloses that it is confused, afraid, and powerless to face the Moroccan people's capacity to mobilize and its determination to fight for its national cause and to preserve the integrity of its territories, on the basis of law and legality.

BANGLADESH

Developments in Relations With India Reported

Rahman, Solanki Talks

92AS0082A Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER
in English 28 Aug 91 pp 1, 10

[Text] New Delhi, 27 August: Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mostafizur Rahman had one and a half hour long meeting with the Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr. Madhav Singh Solanki, at the south block here today, reports BSS.

He was assisted by the Bangladesh High Commissioner to India, Mr. Faruq A. Choudhury, Mr. A.H. Mamood Ali, Additional Foreign Secretary and Mr. Z.S. Chowdhury, Deputy High Commissioner.

The Indian Minister was assisted by Mr. M. Dubey, Foreign Secretary, Mr. K. Srinivasan, Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh, and Mr. R. Bhatia, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs.

Mr. Rahman said he was happy to be able to visit India as the newly elected BNP [Bangladesh Nationalist Party] Government of Bangladesh thought that there were no issues between Bangladesh and India which could not be solved through dialogue. He said with the elected Government in both the countries, there existed the political will to address the problems. He added that the last nine years were lost as appropriate initiatives were not taken.

Referring to "Tin Bigha" he said an excellent situation prevailed for its transfer and that "This should be handed over to us and we should move forward to mutually beneficial areas of cooperations on tribal refugees in India, he said "these people must have gone there due to some mistakes and misgivings. [as published] Now that we have an elected Government and since all three members of parliament from Chittagong Hill Tracts belong to the opposition their problem can be reflected inside parliament as well as outside," he said.

Referring to the Ganges water issue, Bangladesh Foreign Minister said, "as the dry season is approaching it has become urgent" to reach a mutually agreed basis for sharing. This also applied for Teesta. We have an open mind and are ready to discuss the issue. We can take a look at the other rivers also. The important thing is that we have to bring political will to bear upon the question of sharing of river waters.

Mr. Mostafizur Rahman said that only about 80 kilometers of land boundary remained to be demarcated. As soon as Tin Bigha is handed over demarcation will almost be completed.

Mr. Mostafizur Rahman said Bangladesh would like to review negotiations on delimitation of maritime boundary at the earliest possible time. A proposal in this

regard will be sent to the Indian side in due course and the question of a joint survey of Talpatti Island will also be taken up, he added.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister said his Government is of the opinion that India can play a very important role in the economic development of Bangladesh. "This can only happen if we can move forward in our relations," he said.

The Indian External Affairs Minister expressed his gratitude for "prompt acceptance of our invitation to visit India. Our visit comes at a time when Bangladesh has taken a historic decision to change to parliamentary system.

Reciprocating Bangladesh Foreign Minister's statement he said that India should assume important role in Bangladesh's economic development on the basis of equality and good neighbourly and friendly relations.

He said some issue may be solved right now and some may be solved later while new issues might crop up. "This is how it goes on." It is our desire to solve all such issues through friendly negotiations," Mr. Solanki added.

He said, the most immediate issue is Tin Bigha. Our commitment is sincere and determined. It will be given top priority and necessary action is being taken to hand over the corridor.

Mr. Solanki said that on tribal refugees issues, Bangladesh Government's approach is constructive and hoped that it will soon be possible for them to return to their homeland. Indian Foreign Minister expressed the hope that trade and commerce between India and Bangladesh would receive greater filip in the days ahead. He said it was necessary to increase exports from Bangladesh to India.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister welcomed the idea and said if India could also import tea from Bangladesh it would help in bridging the imbalance.

The two Foreign Ministers also decided to initiate annual consultations at the level of foreign secretary's between the two countries. It was also decided to hold the next meeting of the joint Economic Commission which is co-chaired by the two foreign ministries in Dhaka some time in December this year.

Accords on Credit, Taxation

92AS0082B Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER
in English 29 Aug 91 pp 1, 10

[Text] New Delhi, 28 August: Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mr. A.S.M. Mostafizur Rahman called on Indian Prime Minister Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao at the latter's residence yesterday evening, reports BSS.

The Foreign Minister conveyed the greetings of the Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to him. The Foreign Minister said both Bangladesh and India

have elected governments which have provided an excellent opportunity for replying the outstanding bilateral issues between the two countries. Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narasimha Rao said he was aware of the various issues and added "We have to sort these out and forge close links between our two neighbouring countries."

He conveyed his regards to Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and said that he was looking forward to meeting her during the Commonwealth heads of government's conference and also the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] summit.

Meanwhile Bangladesh and India have signed two agreements relating to rupees thirty crore credit facility and avoidance of double taxation. The visiting Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mr. Mostafizur Rahman and Indian External Affairs Minister Mr. Madhav Singh Solanki signed the agreements on behalf of their respective government here last night.

Making a statement on the occasion the External Affairs Minister Mr. Madhav Singh Solanki said Bangladesh has emerged as India's eleventh largest market and capitalised the need for identifying sectors in which joint ventures could be established.

According to Mr. Solanki the convention on the avoidance of double taxation would not only ensure that business enterprises are spared of the inconvenience of meeting the fiscal obligations imposed by both the countries on the same transaction but would also help reduce the incidents of fiscal evasion. The immediate beneficiaries of this agreement will be the airlines and shipping companies. Besides investment in each other's country will also be facilitated.

In his statement Bangladesh Foreign Minister thanked Indian Government for the assistance extended to Bangladesh.

He also thanked India for its help for the rehabilitation of the Bangladesh cyclone victims. He said his country attached great importance to its relations with India and the purpose of his visit was to assure the Indian leadership that Bangladesh desired to maintain friendly and cordial relations with New Delhi.

The money to be given under the government to government credit facility will be used by Bangladesh for the purchase of capital goods such as equipment for jute, textile and paper mills and cement plants, transport machinery and telecom equipment.

Accord on Freight Movement

92AS0082C Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER in English 29 Aug 91 p 10

[Text] An agreement for goods train movement between Bangladesh and India was signed in Dhaka on Wednesday a Communication Ministry press release said, reports BSS.

Mr. G.V. Subrahmanyam, Adviser, Finance Ministry of Railway, India and Mr. M. Fazlul Huq, Additional Secretary, Finance Railway Division, Bangladesh signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments.

Earlier, the bilateral talks between the representatives of the two governments began at the Railway Rest House, Dhaka on Monday.

Movement of containerised cargo by rail and road-cum rail between Bangladesh and India was discussed in the meeting.

The Indian delegation had shown interest in establishing rail-borne container movement to Bangladesh. The Bangladesh side welcomed the proposal and agreed to examine the detailed procedure involved in the proposal.

River Transit Agreement

92AS0082D Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English 30 Aug 91 pp 1, 8

[Text] At the end of three-day talks between the official delegations, Bangladesh and India renewed yesterday in Dhaka the protocol on the river transit for another two years.

The document in this regard for renewal was signed by the Secretary of the Shipping Ministry, Mr. M. Azizul Huq and visiting Indian Secretary of the Surface Transport Ministry, Mr. P.M. Abraham in the evening.

Under the protocol, transit facilities are extended to Indian vessels for passing through two Bangladesh river routes to and from Calcutta port and the eastern Indian states of Assam besides certain waterways of both the countries are allowed to be used by the vessels of the two neighbouring countries.

Emerging out of the concluding talks yesterday, one official said that it was decided that India would provide further port-facilities at Calcutta for jute and jute goods exported from Bangladesh by river routes.

The official delegations at the Secretary-level, in fact, had detailed discussions on technical matters relating to river routes and running of vessels while passing through each other's territories.

The India side pays royalty for use of the Bangladesh river transit routes and paid an amount of Taka 1 crore 17 lakh last year.

The existing protocol renewed yesterday was initially signed two years ago and is due to expire on 3 October next.

Agreement on Tin Bigha

92AS0082E Dhaka THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER
in English 1 Sep 91 pp 1, 10

[Text] The "Tin Bigha" corridor is expected to be handed over to Bangladesh by India by the end of the current year, a Foreign Office spokesman said in Dhaka on Saturday, reports BSS.

Talking about the just-concluded three-day official visit to India by Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mostafizur Rahman, he said a concrete outcome of the visit is that all decks are being cleared for transfer of the corridor to Bangladesh.

The spokesman, Additional Foreign Secretary Mahmood Ali, who was a member of the four-member delegation led by the Foreign Minister that returned to Dhaka last Thursday from the visit, said all matters of mutual interest had come for discussions during Mr. Rahman's talks with Indian External Affairs Minister Madhavsingh Solanki.

The Foreign Minister, on his way to the Indian capital, had talks with West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu on the "Tin Bigha" issue.

His talks with Mr. Solanki in New Delhi covered all issues of bilateral concern including sharing of the waters of rivers Ganges and the Teesta.

Other subjects like the return of the Chakma refugees from India to their homes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, balance of trade, and greater economic cooperation came up for discussions.

The Foreign Minister called on Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao, who incidentally is well conversant with the Indo-Bangladesh ties because of his being the Indian External Affairs Minister in the past.

Mr. Rao showed "keen" interest in resolving the bilateral disputes and further promotion of the neighbourliness, said the spokesman.

Diplomatic circles here believe that the first high-level contacts between the new governments in Bangladesh and India have gone on well, promising a "political will" from the two democratically elected governments to forge closer links.

Two accords were signed during the visit for avoidance of double taxation and an Indian state credit of Rs.[rupees]30 crore for purchase of goods from India.

As the discussions on different issues went off well, two sides are keen to continue the dialogue at higher political plane.

Mr. Solanki will visit Bangladesh in the month of December to attend the meeting of Indo-Bangladesh Joint Economic Commission, of which two Foreign Ministers are Co-Chairman.

During the visit, Bangladesh has stressed the need for an agreement of sharing the waters of the Ganges and Teesta before the advent of the next lean season.

Two sides discussed the bilateral trade and the balance, which is heavily against Bangladesh. New Delhi assured Dhaka of unrestricted entry of Bangladesh goods in India as a measure to obviate the trade gap.

Two sides saw big scope for joint ventures, a line that is expected to be followed up seriously.

Judging by the coverage given by the Indian Press to the visit of the Bangladesh Foreign Minister, it appears that the talks between two Foreign Ministers augured well for a more cooperative bilateral ties.

The NATIONAL HERALD, mouthpiece of the ruling Congress Party, gave prominent coverage to the visit.

Some Press comments suggested that the very fact that Mr. Mostafizur Rahman represented an elected government in Bangladesh contributed to creating a propitious climate for fruitful discussions.

Analyst's Comments

92AS0082F Dhaka THE NEW NATION in English
3 Sep 91 pp 1, 12

[Article by A.Z.M. Haider]

[Text] The singular achievement of the just-concluded Indo-Bangladesh ministerial meeting in the Indian capital is the creation of a climate of confidence which is expected to create condition conducive to a really meaningful negotiation for resolution of substantive issues like repatriation of tribal refugees to Bangladesh from the Indian state of Tripura and apportioning of the dry month flow of the Ganges and the Teesta etc.

According to Bangladesh Foreign Office, this climate of confidence, which was made possible mainly due to coming to power of the democratically elected governments at both the capitals, was clearly missing during the past nine years of autocratic regime in Bangladesh leading to a big communication gap between the two countries on all matters including outstanding problems affecting their bilateral relations. The rapport thus created between the two democratic governments the Additional Foreign Secretary Mahmud Ali hoped, would not only help generate the required political will on both sides to help resolve their pending problems but would also open a new frontier of close cooperation between them in the fields of trade, commerce as well as in the setting up of joint venture projects.

The decision to transfer Tin-Bigha corridor to Bangladesh before the close of the current calendar year was not the only positive aspect of the Foreign Ministers diplomatic sojourn to Delhi. The other positive element is the joint decision to form a five member committee including three opposition members from the Hill districts to Bangladesh Parliament to negotiate settlement

with tribal refugees in the Indian state of Tripura. The proposed negotiation is expected to create confidence in the minds of the refugees and impel them to return home.

This decision was taken when the Bangladesh side reportedly informed the Indian side that the representatives of the tribal population to Bangladesh Parliament never raised a hue and cry on the problems of their electorate inside the House or outside. Nor the local governments in the three hill districts, which are empowered to deal with 22 subjects independently, have never complained about insecurity or threat to life and property of the tribal population. Bangladesh delegation reportedly insisted in the disbanding of the refugee camps set up across the border and urged India to refuse logistic support to the insurgents. The Indians finally admitted Bangladesh's approach to the tribal question was highly constructive and agreed to the formation of a five-member committee to start negotiation with the refugees for their repatriation to Bangladesh.

About the sharing of the dry month flow of the Ganges and the Teesta the meeting agreed to promote serious discussion at expert as well as political levels for expeditious settlement of the problem. The discussion is expected to begin shortly.

But the focus of attention during Mustafiz-Solanki talks was the emphasis on economic cooperation between the two countries. The two sides underscored the possibility of setting up more and more joint venture projects and agreed to identify areas in which such projects can be started, to the mutual benefit of both. India's willingness to forge closer economic cooperation with Bangladesh was amply demonstrated by the fact that the former conceded unrestricted flow of Bangladesh goods to Indian market. Delhi agreed to it to bridge the trade gap between Bangladesh and India. India's export to Bangladesh stood at 550 crore taka as against Bangladesh's export to India worth 35 crore taka.

All these measures likely to be taken soon point unmistakably to the opening up of a new vista to bilateral relations kept prejudiced by the autocratic regime in this country during the past nine years.

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